

# Saipan Tribune

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FRIDAY DECEMBER 31, 2004

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**Were you able to stick to your New Year's resolutions for 2004?**

Let your resolutions be a reality for 2005. [www.saipantribune.com](http://www.saipantribune.com) will assist your efforts.

## Death toll may pass 100,000

By CHRIS BRUMMITT  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

**BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AP)**—Residents fled coasts in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand after warnings of possible new tsunamis Thursday, and pilots in Indonesia dropped food to cliff-ringed villages yet to be visited by outsiders four days after the quake-and-wave disaster. The Red Cross feared the death toll across 11 nations would top 100,000.

Surveys of the swath of tropical Asia struck by Sunday's 9.0 earthquake and tsunamis were gaining ground, with relief workers still uncovering scenes of flattened villages and survivors living on coconuts.

The death toll stood at about 84,000, with Indonesia worst affected, followed by Sri Lanka, India and Thailand. With tens of thousands

See DEATH on Page 12

# NMI signs ADS with China

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

The CNMI will greet the New Year with an additional arrow up its economic sleeve—the much-anticipated Approved Destination Status agreement, which was formally signed yesterday in Beijing. The agreement boosts the CNMI hope of luring at least 50,000 Chinese tourists each year.

Acting governor Diego T. Benavente disclosed that the CNMI delegation, headed by Gov. Juan N. Babauta, formally signed the ADS Memorandum of Understanding with Chinese officials yesterday noon in Beijing.

“The ADS is now complete with that signing and we are now a full-fledged authorized destination for Chinese tourists,” said Benavente.

Benavente said the governor spoke with him yesterday shortly after the signing. “The governor said that the ceremony went well,” said Benavente.

Details of the agreement will be discussed at length during a press conference at the Governor's Office on Monday morning, he said.

The Dec. 30 signing came after at least four aborted trips by CNMI officials to China this year.

Beijing, which notified the CNMI of its ADS application approval in early October, had initially planned to hold the formal signing in November but due to

See NMI on Page 12

## Yun's Corp. acquires Town House

Yun's Corp., which owns the San Jose Mart, 99 Cents, and the New Payless Market, has added a new company to its holdings, after it bought the Town House Department Store in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan.

Town House Inc., which built and operates the Town House Shopping Center, reached an agreement to sell the department store's inventory and lease the retail premises and other assets to Yun's Corp. on Dec. 23, 2004.

Ho Jin Yoon, president of Yun's Corp., and Noli C. Cadag, executive vice president of Jones & Guerrero Company Inc., the parent company of Town House Inc., announced the conclusion of the transaction yesterday.

Yoon said he was very pleased and elated to step into Ken Jones' shoes. Having taken over the Payless Market in Saipan in 2002, he said he is now taking on Town House to enhance his opportunity to serve the people of Chalan Kanoa

See YUN'S on Page 12

## PERSON OF THE YEAR

# The CNMI Soldier

By SHAN SEMAN  
REPORTER

Liberty, peace, and freedom.

These are key elements in the American way of life, propelling our country to undreamed-of heights of prosperity, power, and strength. Such a historic achievement, however, did not come without a price because even now, there are groups and people who want to take that away

from us. It is then that we turn to our soldiers to defend us and keep us safe.

While we sit at home and watch our TV sets, take a stroll through the park, enjoy our crystal beach waters, celebrate birthdays with loved ones, or even party until the sun rises, our men and women in uniform are quietly guarding the front, turning away from their lives so that we may have one.

See THE on Page 12



SHAN SEMAN

Military personnel from the U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Marines strike a pose for a photo at the American Memorial Park Court of Honor yesterday. The Saipan Tribune recognizes CNMI soldiers as its Person of the Year for 2004.

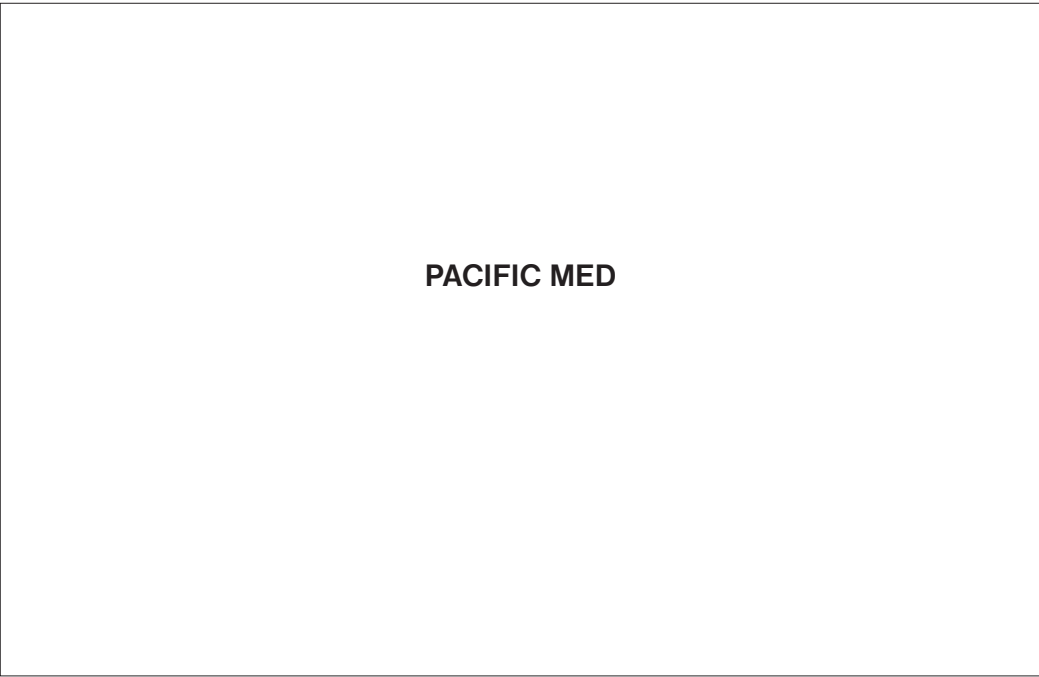
# Local

DIABETES  
+GREEN

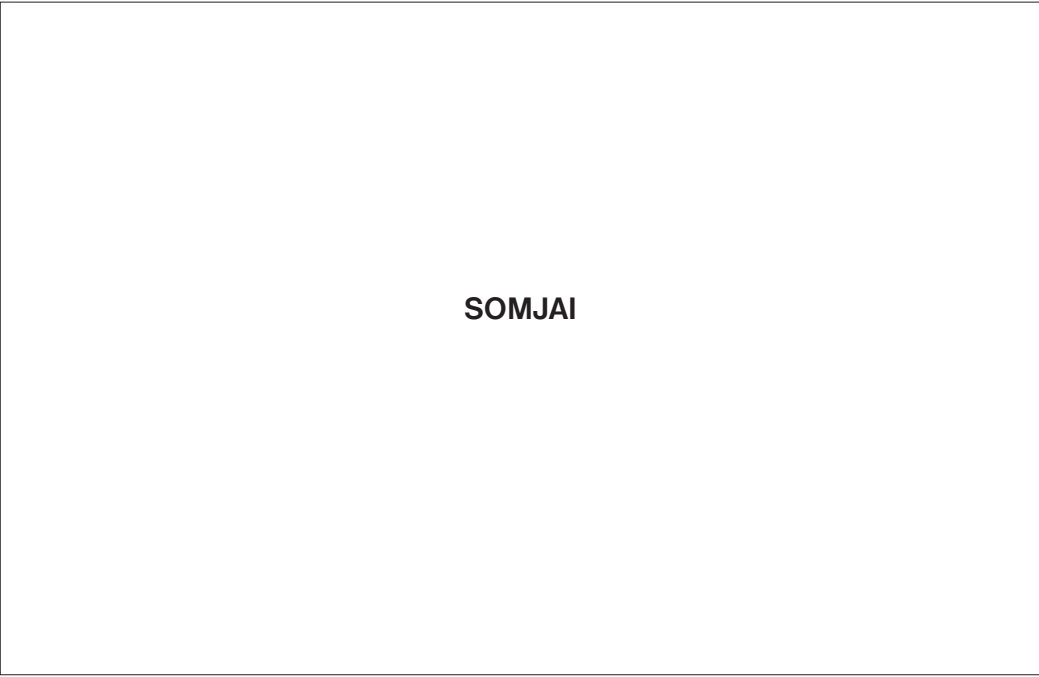
LOTTERY



The Saipan Tribune accepts unsolicited pictures of birthdays, weddings, baptisms, and other community and family events for free publication. Material submitted should be original and not copyrighted, in digital or print format. Must include a caption containing complete details (a description of the event, identities of the persons in the picture, the date, and the place), the name of the contributor, and a contact number. The Saipan Tribune reserves the right to edit the caption, the date of publication and the size of the picture. Contributors can e-mail their submissions to [editor@saipantribune.com](mailto:editor@saipantribune.com). To check if contributions are received, call 213-6287, 213-3448, or 213-8743.



PACIFIC MED



SOMJAI

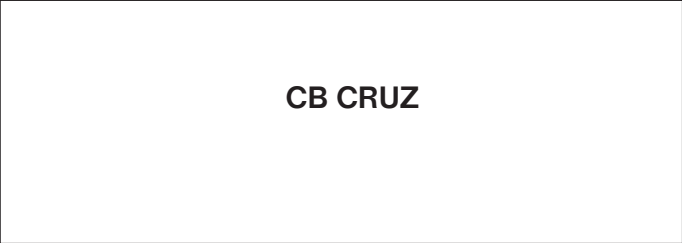
See EX-SPEAKER on Page 12



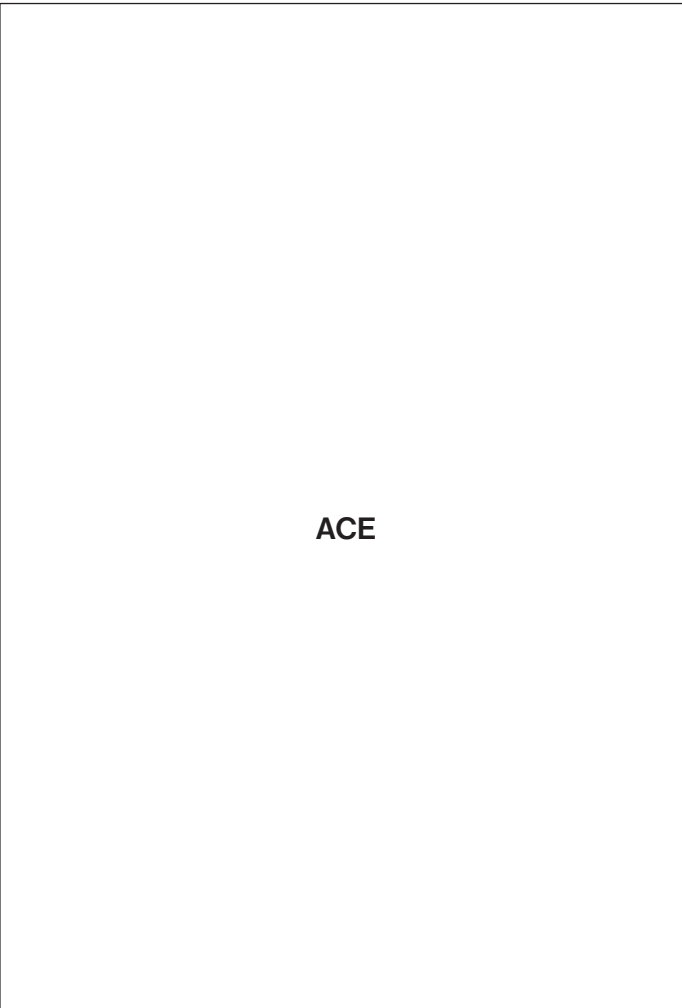
SAUNSHINE  
AUTO



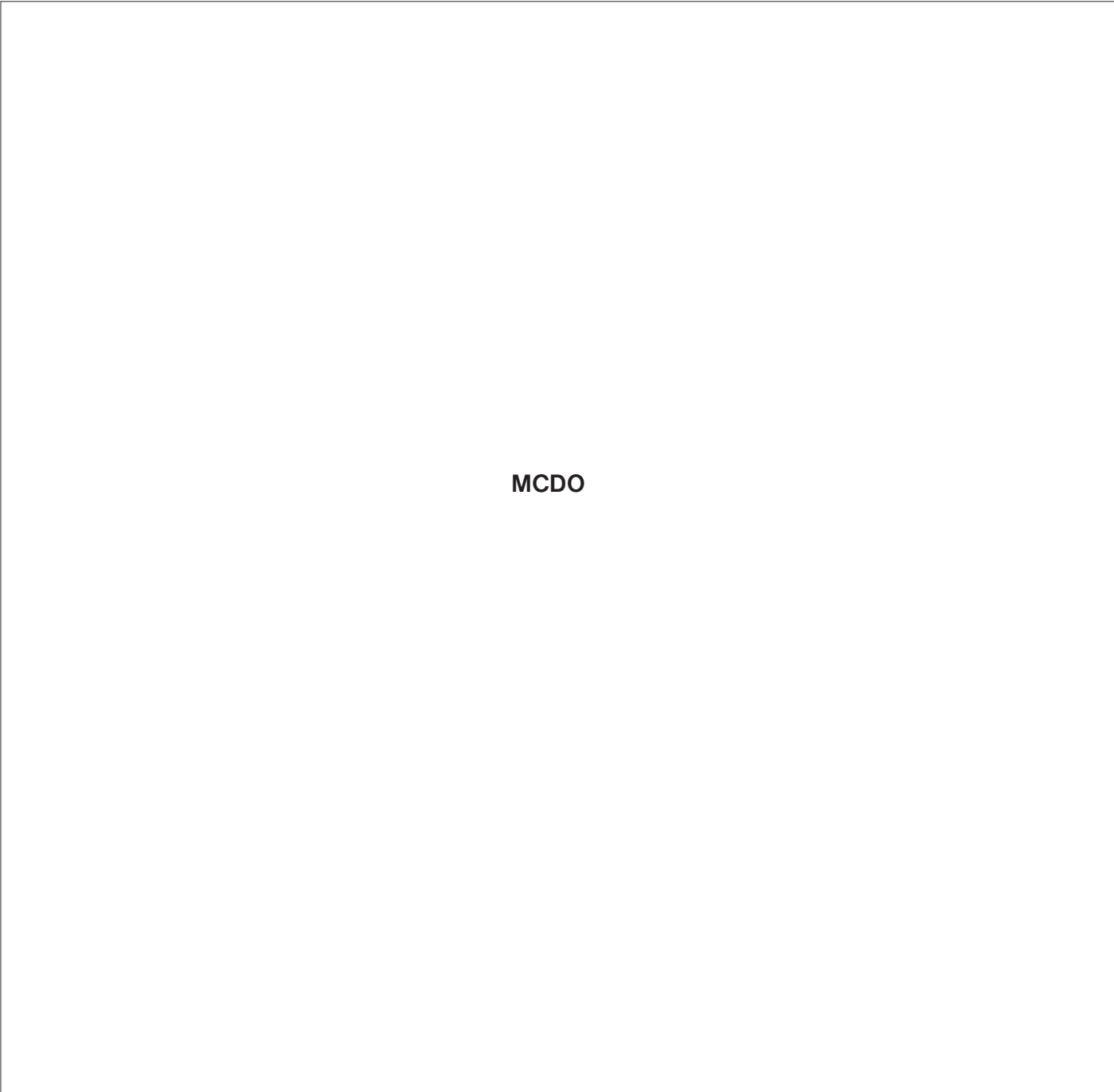
CAMACHO



CB CRUZ



ACE



MCDO





The La Fiesta complex in San Roque, Saipan.

FILE PHOTO

# NMC stumbles with the La Fiesta fiasco

By AGNES E. DONATO  
REPORTER

Even from the beginning, the year 2004 held no great promises for the Pacific Gateway Project, for which the Northern Marianas College purchased the \$7.5 million La Fiesta Mall in San Roque.

On Jan. 1, 2004, the college took over the facility amid wide criticism relating to a wide range of issues—from the governor's role in the acquisition of the property to the facility's high maintenance costs to NMC's ability to recruit foreign students.

Soon enough, NMC Board of Regents chairwoman Kimberlyn King-Hinds cried that contrary to the college leadership's expectations, La Fiesta was bleeding NMC dry. NMC reported that it was spending \$55,000 a month for the power generation plant's fuel alone.

With the college facing a huge budget shortfall, Kenneth Wright quit as NMC president on Feb. 20 over a loss of confidence by the Board of Regents.

Wright's resignation came a month after the Western Association of Schools and Colleges-Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges placed NMC's accreditation on warning status due to the college's failure to correct finance-related problems and inability to comply with certain accreditation standards.

By April 30, the NMC regents voted unanimously to put on hold the Pacific Gateway project and shut down the operations of La Fiesta for lack of funding.

Yet, the ACCJC retained NMC's accreditation on warning status in June, citing concerns over NMC's lack of resources to maintain two campuses.

WASC's Senior College

Commission followed suit in July, issuing a similar warning that put the college's four-year elementary education program—its only baccalaureate program—at risk.

Amid all the problems stemming from La Fiesta, Gov. Juan N. Babauta did not waver in his support for the Pacific Gateway Project or NMC's operation of the La Fiesta complex.

Babauta made various efforts to rescue the La Fiesta project, offering in May to reimburse the college for operational costs spent on the facility from December 2003 to February 2004, amounting to some \$150,000.

The Governor's Office also offset NMC's monthly expenses at La Fiesta from March to September, when the fiscal year ended.

The start of fiscal year 2005, however, posed a new problem for the college, prompting NMC officials to ask the Legislature for additional funding for the operation of the mall. The Legislature disapproved, leaving NMC without money to run the facility beginning Oct. 1.

Another problem was the first \$200,000 leasehold payment due on Oct. 29 to the mall's original sellers—Hotel Nikko Saipan and Coco's Lagoon Development Corp.

In an effort to rid NMC of the La Fiesta burden, the College Council, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the Associated Students of NMC submitted a proposal on Sept. 11 recommending that the Board of Regents transfer ownership of the property to the CNMI government and that the Executive Branch assume management of the facility.

The Board of Regents adopted the recommendation and the memorandum of agreement

See NMC on Page 5

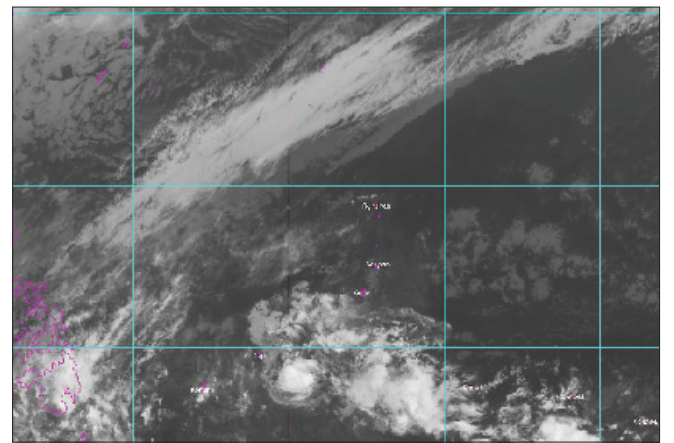
## FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 7, 2004

DEPARTURES					ARRIVALS				
<b>Saipan-Manila</b>					<b>Manila-Saipan</b>				
CO 900	8:00am	8:45am	1,3		CO 901	7:00pm	7:00pm	1,3,4,5,7	
CO 902	8:15am	8:55am	4,7		CO 901	7:00pm	8:45am	2	
CO 906	8:30am	8:10am	2,6		CO 900	8:00am	8:00am	1,4,5,7	
CO 912	8:20am	8:10am	1,3,4,5,6,7		CO 908	10:15am	11:45am	Daily	
CO 911	8:15am	1:00pm	1		CO 909	10:40am	1:00pm	1,5,7	
CO 904	10:00am	11:00am	1,4,7		CO 904	3:00pm	4:00pm	Daily	
CO 908	10:00am	11:00am	Daily		CO 908	4:00pm	5:00pm	1,5	
CO 911	10:00am	11:00am	1,3,4,5,6,7		CO 903	4:00pm	5:00pm	3,6	
CO 908	10:00am	11:00am	Daily		CO 904	4:30pm	5:00pm	2,4,7	
CO 906	10:00am	11:00am	1,3,4,5,7		CO 906	7:00pm	8:00pm	Daily	
MF 3006	7:45pm	8:00pm	Daily		MF 3002	8:45pm	10:00pm	Daily	
MF 3008	8:15pm	8:30pm	Daily		MF 3003	8:00pm	7:00pm	Daily	
<b>Saipan-Honolulu</b>					<b>Honolulu-Saipan</b>				
CO 909	10:00am	11:00am	Daily		CO 900	10:45pm	4:00am+1	2,4,7	
<b>Saipan-Magapan</b>					<b>Magapan-Saipan</b>				
MF 076	8:00am	11:00am	Daily		MF 077	8:00pm	1:00pm+1	Daily	
<b>Saipan-Shanghai</b>					<b>Shanghai-Saipan</b>				
MF 008	4:00pm	7:00pm	3,6		MF 007	8:00pm	2:00pm+1	2,6	
<b>Saipan-Whangarei</b>					<b>Whangarei-Saipan</b>				
CO 900	10:00am	11:00am	2,6		CO 902	8:00pm	2:00am+1	1,5	
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>					<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				
MF 076	8:00am	1:00pm	Daily		JAL 947	10am	2:00pm	Daily	
JAL 948	2:00pm	8:00pm	Daily		MF 076	10:00am	3:00pm	Daily	
MF 076	8:00pm	7:00pm	Daily		MF 077	8:45pm	0:00am+1	Daily	
<b>Saipan-Corpus</b>					<b>Corpus-Saipan</b>				
JAL 940	10:00am	1:00pm	Daily		JAL 945	10:00pm	2:00am+1	Daily	
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>					<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				
CO 904	10:00am	11:00am	Daily		CO 902	8:00pm	1:00am+1	Daily	
<b>Saipan-Hong Kong</b>					<b>Hong Kong-Saipan</b>				
CO 909	10:00am	11:00am	1,5		CO 910	10:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5	
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>					<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				
MF 3006	7:45pm	8:00pm	Daily		MF 3000	8:00pm	8:00pm	Daily	
CO 908	10:00am	11:00am	Daily		CO 902	8:15am	8:45am	Daily	
MF 3007	10:00am	10:00am	Daily		MF 3003	1:00pm	2:00pm	Daily	
CO 908	10:00am	11:00am	Daily		CO 904	8:00pm	7:00pm	Daily	
MF 3003	8:15pm	8:45pm	Daily		MF 3006	7:00pm	7:00pm	Daily	
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>					<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				
CO 901	8:00pm	8:00pm	3,6		CO 902	10:00pm	4:00am+1	3,6	
<b>Saipan-Tinian</b>					<b>Tinian-Saipan</b>				
ZU 104	8:45pm	8:45pm	Daily		ZU 102	7:00pm	7:00pm	Daily	
ZU 104	7:00am	7:00am	Daily		ZU 104	7:00am	8am	Daily	
ZU 106	8am	8:00am	Daily		ZU 106	8:20am	8:00am	Daily	
ZU 107	8:40am	8:00am	Daily		ZU 108	8am	8:10am	Daily	
ZU 108	8:15am	8:00am	Daily		ZU 109	10am	10:10am	Daily	
ZU 111	10:45pm	10:00pm	Daily		ZU 112	7:00pm	7:00pm	Daily	
ZU 111	11:00am	11:00am	Daily		ZU 114	10pm	12:10pm	Daily	
ZU 115	1pm	1:00pm	Daily		ZU 119	1:00pm	1:40pm	Daily	
ZU 117	2:00pm	2:40pm	Daily		ZU 119	2:00pm	3pm	Daily	
ZU 118	4pm	4:00pm	Daily		ZU 120	4:00pm	4:00pm	Daily	
MF 3006	8:00pm	8:45pm	5 & 7		ZU 122	8pm	8:10pm	Daily	
ZU 121	8:40pm	8:00pm	Daily		ZU 124	8:00pm	8:10pm	Daily	
ZU 124	8:40pm	8:00pm	Daily		ZU 125	8:20pm	8:00pm	Daily	
ZU 126	8pm	8:10pm	Daily		MF 3004	7:45pm	7:00pm	5 & 8	
MF 3007	8pm	8:10pm	News Pk. 8						
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>					<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				
MF 3006	8:00am	10:00am	Daily		CO 910	8:25am	7:00am	2,6	
CO 908	10:00am	10:40am			CO 941	8:25am	7:00am	1,2,4,7	
MF 3001	10:00pm	1:00pm	Daily		MF 3006	7:00pm	8:10am	1,3,4,7	
CO 900	2:00pm	3:00pm			MF 3000	7:00pm	8:10pm	2,6	
MF 3008	8pm	8:00pm	Daily		MF 3003	8:00am	8:00am	Daily	
MF 3009	7:00pm	8:00pm	5		CO 906	8:15am	8:00am		
CO 908	7:10pm	7:00pm			MF 3000	10:00am	10:00am	Daily	
MF 3007	8:00pm	8:00pm	8		MF 3007	10:00am	10:00am	Daily	
					CO 901	1:00pm	2:10pm		
					MF 3006	8:45pm	8:10pm	Daily	
					CO 900	8:00pm	8:40pm		
<b>Tinian-Saipan</b>					<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				
MF 3006	8pm	8:45pm	5 & 7		MF 3004	8:00pm	8:10pm		
MF 3007	8:00pm	8:00pm	8						

## FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				<b>Tinian-Saipan</b>			
FRE 100	7:30am	8:00am	Daily	FRE 110	11:00am	11:50am	Daily
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				FRE 116	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 100	8:20am	8:50am	Daily	FRE 117	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				FRE 118	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 200	10:00am	10:20am	Daily	FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				FRE 124	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 200	10:45am	11:15am	Daily	FRE 125	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				<b>Tinian-Saipan</b>			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily	<b>Flights to Saipan or Tinian</b>			
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				FRE 100	7:00am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 300	4:30pm	5:20pm	Daily	FRE 104	7:00am	8:00am	Daily
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				FRE 107	8:00am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 400	8:00pm	8:30pm	Daily	FRE 108	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 400	8:45pm	7:15pm	Daily	FRE 112	11:00am	11:10am	Daily
<b>Saipan-Saipan</b>				FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 101	8:45am	8:50am	Daily	FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily	FRE 118	1:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily	FRE 120	4:30pm	4:40pm	Daily
FRE 107	8:45am	8:50am	Daily	FRE 122	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 109	8:10am	8:20am	Daily	FRE 124	5:45pm	8:15pm	Daily
FRE 111	10:45am	10:55am	Daily	FRE 126	5:30pm	8:30pm	Daily

## WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 AM., DECEMBER 30, 2004

Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A strong cold front stretches from 25n141e to 21n138e...then continues as a shearline to 14n130e. Cloudiness and showers are found along and up to 300 miles northwest of this boundary. Another cold front extends from 17n180 to 15n176e. Showers are occurring along and up to 150 miles north of the front. A shearline extends westward from the end of the front to 13n160e to 15n155e. Breezy conditions and light showers are found along and up to 150 miles north of this boundary. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms around Palau between 6n and 9n from 130e to 135e... And from south of Guam southeastward across Chuuk...Pohnpei and Kosrae within 75 miles of a line from 11n144e to 7n151e to 6n158e to 4n165e.



### SAIPAN AND TINIAN

Partly cloudy with isolated showers.

Winds: East around 15 mph.

Temperature: Highs around 85. Lows around 76.



### GUAM AND ROTA

Partly cloudy with isolated shower. Breezy.

Winds: East around 15 mph.

Temperature: Highs around 85. Lows around 76.



### PALAU

Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.

Winds: East at 10-15 kt.

### POHNPEI

Partly cloudy with isolated showers.

Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.



### YAP AND ULITHI

Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. A slight chance of thunderstorms tonight.

Winds: East at 15-20 kt.

### KOSRAE

Partly cloudy with isolated showers.

Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.



### CHUUK

Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.

Winds: East at 15-20 kt.

### MAJURO

Partly cloudy with isolated showers.

Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

# Surcharge proposal awakens people to utility issues

By AGNES E. DONATO  
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. failed to implement the proposed fuel surcharge, but it at least managed to spur an exchange of ideas on ways to solve the CNMI's utility-related problems.

The CUC management started reviving the fuel surcharge proposal in March, but the CUC board of directors did not start discussing it thoroughly until the middle of the year.

On Aug. 10, CUC comptroller Sohale Samari reported that the utility firm was fast running out of cash due to the series of fuel price increases and the government's non-payment of bills. At the time, CUC claimed that the CNMI government owed the corporation \$17.9 million for power consumption—a debt that the administration is contesting in court.

The CUC management said the only way the corporation could continue providing services was to pass the rising cost of fuel onto the customers,

in the form of a fuel surcharge amounting 3.5 cents per kwh.

After almost two months of discussion, the CUC board approved the plan with a 4-2 vote on Oct. 20.

Based on CUC's timetable, the fuel surcharge was to be implemented by Dec. 7, by which time CUC was supposed to have completed the publication of the draft regulations in the Commonwealth Register and the required 30-day public comment period.

On Nov. 26, the CUC board approved the fuel surcharge regulations with some modifications. The board's decision would have increased the government rate from 16 cents per kwh to 19.5 kwh, the commercial rate from 16 cents per kwh to 17.5 cents per kwh, and the residential rate from 11 cents per kwh to 12.5 cents per kwh, starting December 2004.

The Attorney General's Office however intervened, saying that the approved regulation was unlawful because it was too different from the proposed regulation earlier presented to the public and because it discriminated

against one class of customers, among other reasons.

Left with no choice but to reconsider the proposal, the CUC board made another vote on Nov. 30. The original plan to implement an across-the-board fuel surcharge of 3.5-cents per kwh failed to receive enough votes, with three voting in favor of the plan and three voting against it.

CUC vice chairman Herman P. Sablan, who had been supportive of the fuel surcharge, was not present to cast his vote.

As a result, the fuel surcharge regulation was nullified and not implemented as scheduled.

But while CUC failed to convince consumers to support the fuel surcharge during the public hearings, the firm nevertheless succeeded in opening the public's eye to the many problems besetting the utility firm.

The outcome was a stream of ideas from various sectors to solve CUC's systemic problems.

Among the suggestions were for CUC to ensure all consumers are metered; convert its power plant back to utilizing the less expensive No. 2 bunker oil; and pursue the privatization of the two power plants.



## NMC

From Page 4

was executed between NMC and Babauta on Sept. 15.

Hotel Nikko and Coco's Lagoon have consented to the

agreement in November. To date, the final agreement has yet to be signed.

Meantime, NMC's accreditation remains hanging in the balance after it missed the Dec. 8 deadline set by the

accrediting commission for information regarding the finalization of La Fiesta's transfer to the CNMI government.

The accrediting commission is set to decide on NMC's status in January 2005.

GOLDS GYM

COSTCO  
+BLUE

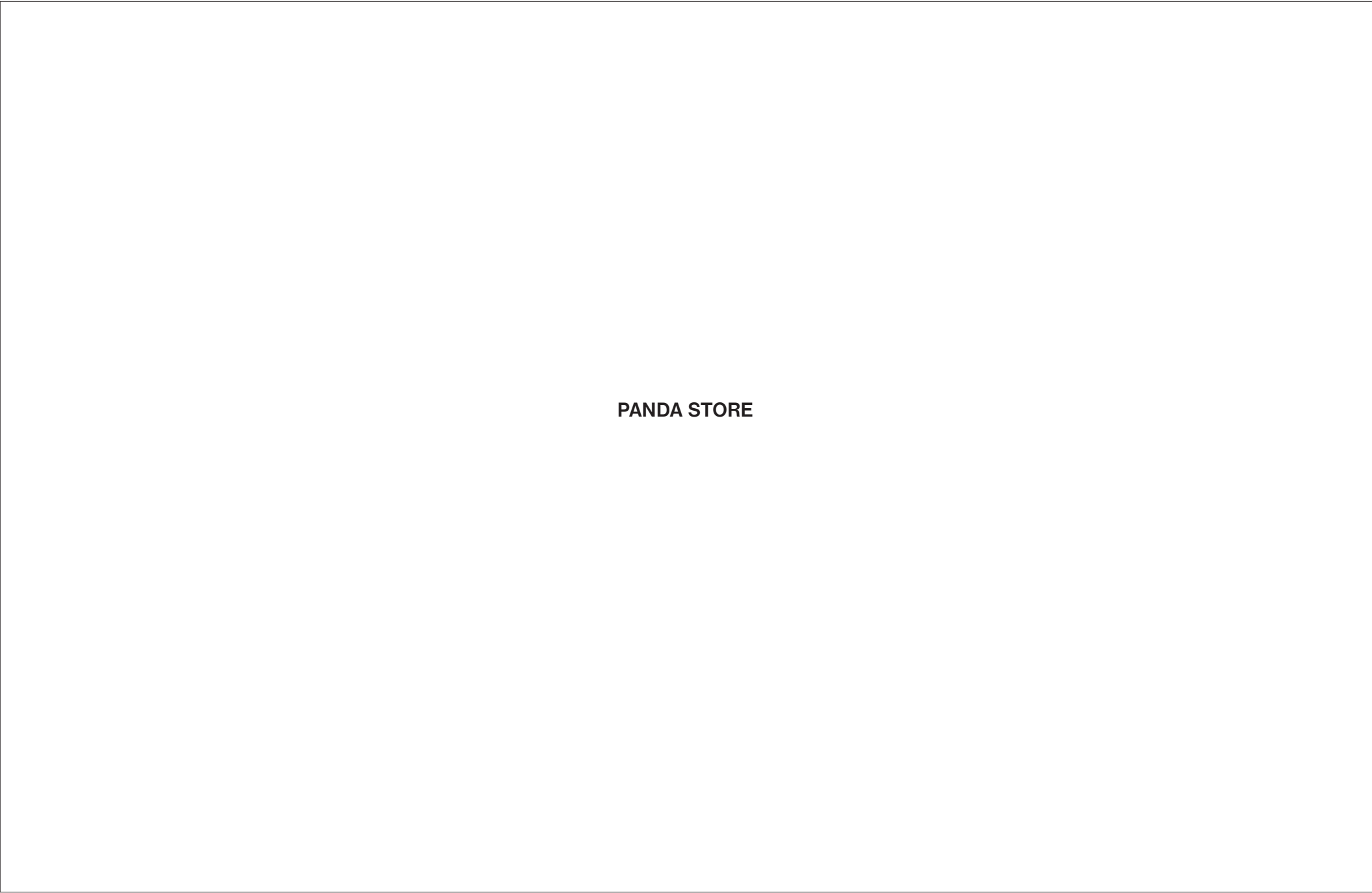
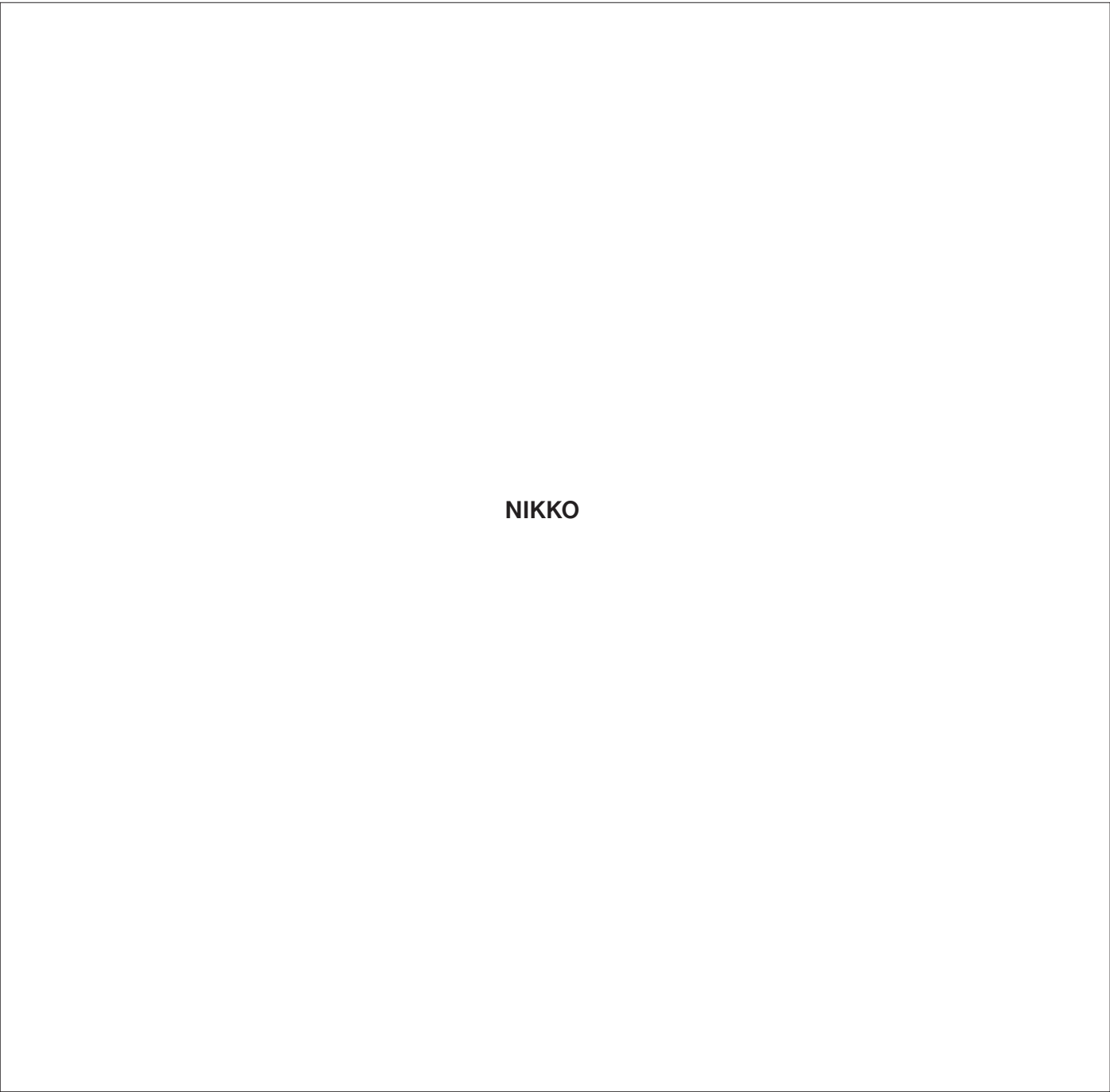
BABY NEWS

NIKKO

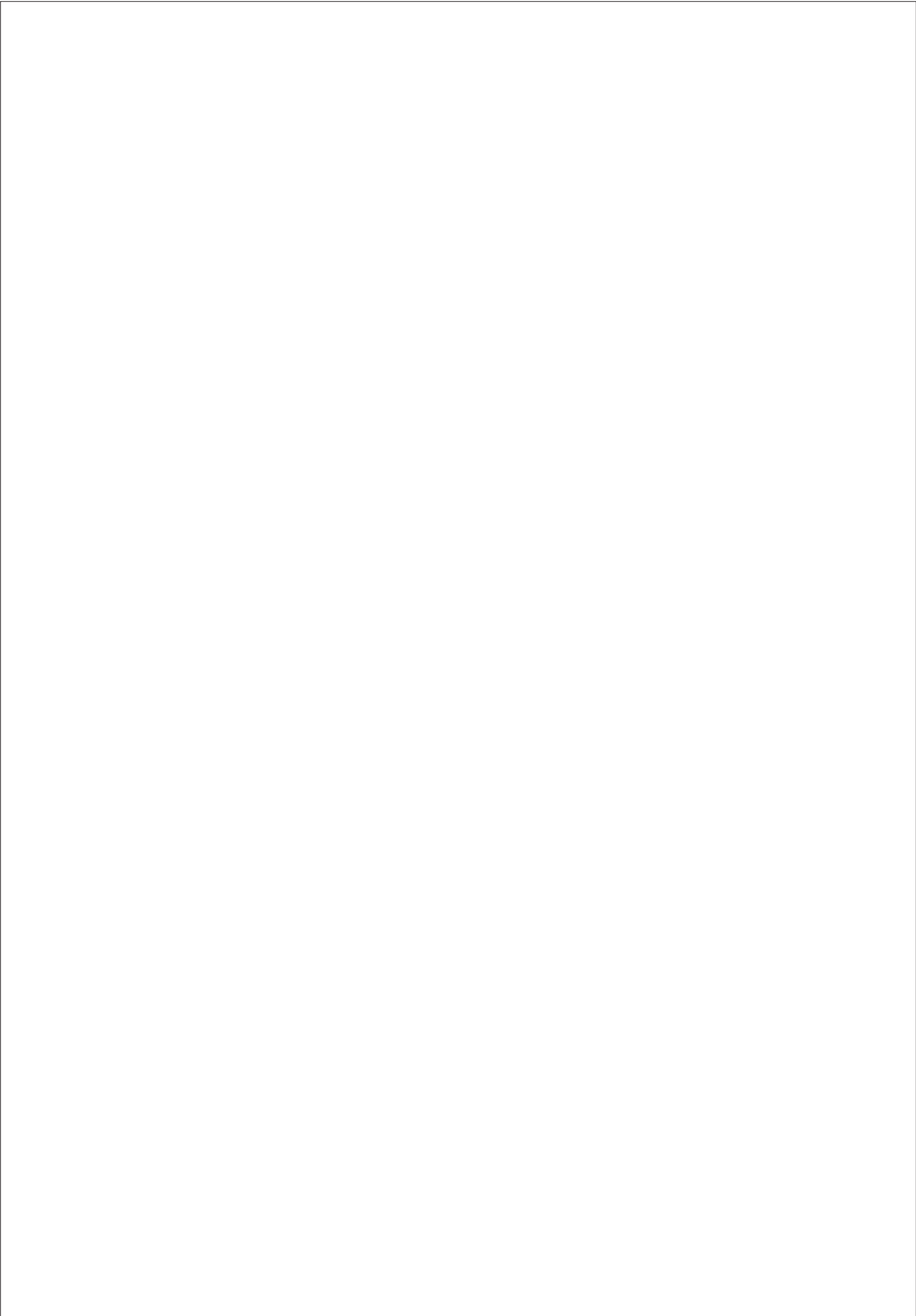
**ptc ussp club**

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+red**







# Opinion

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIV, Issue No. 268

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The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

## The price gouging stupor

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Letters to the Editor

NMI

From Page 1

conflict with the schedule of key Chinese tourism officials, it was moved to Dec. 15. The Dec. 15 schedule was later moved to Dec. 21, which also proved to be not feasible. Finally, officials agreed to schedule it on Dec. 30.

Aside from the ADS agreement, the CNMI was also expected to sign a complementary agreement on pre-arranged group tours of Chinese to the Commonwealth.

The ADS serves as a guide for Chinese tourists when making travel choices overseas. Chinese tourists are able to travel to ADS countries more easily as part of pre-organized tour groups. This will also allow the CNMI to openly advertise the destination in China.

This comes even as the federal government has expressed concern over the readiness of the CNMI to handle the entry of Chinese citizens.

Insular Affairs Deputy Assistant Secretary David Cohen said in a recent talk with Babauta in Washington, D.C. that the ADS poses new challenges to the CNMI's local immigration in view of the possible entry of "questionable" individuals.

The federal government said the CNMI should ensure proper background security checks of tourists prior to their entry into the Commonwealth.

Over the years, CNMI and Guam authorities have intercepted foreign nationals, mostly Chinese, in the sea trying to illegally enter Guam.

The MOU signing on pre-packaged group tours was initially set early this year but was held off due to a brewing political tension between the U.S. and China over the U.S. government's policy requiring foreigners to be photographed and fingerprinted upon entry to the United States. The MOU was seen as a step toward achieving ADS.

Babauta earlier said that the MOU

had already been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Chinese embassy in the United States as well as by the U.S. State Department.

Babauta had announced the ADS granting in early October, together with Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino chair Michael Kwan and TDHC general manager Tom Liu.

In anticipation of the status, the Marianas Visitors Authority has set up three offices in China for CNMI marketing and promotions.

Liu said he expects to see more direct flights between China and Saipan. He said that Beijing-Saipan flights may be added by early 2005.

Currently, there are chartered flights coming from China to the CNMI every week: two flights from Guangzhou and two from Shanghai. These flights are chartered by THDC using China Southern Airline and China Eastern Airline.

"It may take some time to prepare for

the Beijing-Saipan flights. We're looking at January," Liu said.

The CNMI's ADS application was reportedly recommended for approval by CNTA chair He Guanghei, who visited the CNMI in early 2003.

Following his visit, other Chinese delegations also came separately to the CNMI, including China's consul general and deputy consul general to Los Angeles.

The Pacific Asia Travel Association earlier underscored the huge potential of China as a tourism market, saying that Chinese spending on travel is predicted to reach \$100 billion by 2008.

John M. Koldowski, PATA's Strategic Intelligence Centre managing director, said there were more departures from China than from Japan—the CNMI's premier tourism market—in 2002.

More than 16 million people from China traveled outside the country. In 1993, the recorded outbound travel

from China was at 3.74 million only.

Compared to travel statistics in 1996, China's outbound travel soared by 328.1 percent, while that of Japan slightly went down by 1 percent. "What Japan took 30 years to do, China did in six years," Koldowski said.

With a population of at least 1.2 billion, China's "super rich" class equates to almost 11 million people. The middle class, which comprises 8.1 percent of the population, earns an equivalent of \$4,000 to \$12,000.

In Australia, PATA said that Chinese tourists spend an average of A\$5,638 during a visit; in Singapore, S\$498; in Thailand, US\$610.

CNMI authorities said a maximum of some 50,000 Chinese visitors to the islands in 2005 is a manageable number, considering the hotels and facilities available in CNMI, as well as the passenger screening capacity of the currently understaffed Transportation Security Administration.

THE

From Page 1

We sometimes tend to forget this, forgetting that the lives we have shaped for ourselves are made possible in large part because of the men and women in uniform who have taken on the burden of making sure that we go through our life with lesser worries. They have chosen to face the dangers and the possibility of getting or hurt or even making the ultimate sacrifice so that the rest of us need not worry about that.

Pfc. Chris Cepeda, who just came home from training in Texas, said as much, relating that he originally had no intention of joining the U.S. Army but when 9/11 happened, it bothered him so much that he decided to become a soldier. "For my kids," he

said, "I'd rather go there and fight the enemy, [rather] than let them come here." His children have been his motivation ever since. "I'm doing this for their safety."

Our CNMI soldiers face death at every turn in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hot spots in the world—something that we cannot imagine being part of our daily lives—putting their lives on the forefront of danger, with the hopes of preventing danger and harm from reaching our backyards. They display sheer discipline, so that even when the going gets tough, their minds and hearts remain focus on their mission and goal. While we enjoy the flashy fireworks above us tonight and tomorrow in celebration of the New Year, many of our soldiers will see

different flashes of fireworks, ones that are far more deadly and with greater potential for harm.

These, and a host of other reasons, are why the *Saipan Tribune* has chosen the CNMI soldier as its 2004 Person of the Year.

Reports of the war in Iraq, search for Osama bin Laden, and disaster relief assistance, among others, hit newsstands and television sets everyday, and the sons and daughters of the CNMI are at the forefront of these events, whether in the U.S. Army, Coast Guard, Navy, Air Force, or Marines. Regardless of the politics surrounding some of these events, such as the Iraq war, our soldiers continue to acquit themselves admirably, rising to the occasion magnificently in ways that could only bring pride to the CNMI.

"We have committed ourselves in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, a job that is demanding not just only of mind and body but of heart and spirit as well," said Echo Company Commander Franklin R. Babauta, whose company will be deployed to Iraq in February. "When we complete our training, we will not walk away to take our place behind a desk or behind a service counter. We will step up and out to take our place as American citizens and in the front lines of danger, a job that is hard, but a job that is necessary, nonetheless."

"Among our responsibilities, we will put our lives on the line to serve, protect, and defend the United States," he added.

Among those who put his life on the line and will always be kept in the

hearts of many was Sgt. Yihjyh "Eddie" Chen, a CNMI police officer from Sept. 25, 1995, to Dec. 23, 1999, who was killed by hostile fire in Sadr City in Baghdad last April 4 at the age of 31.

Several others sustained injuries and returned home for a brief stay but have chosen to go back. According to Military and Veterans Affairs deputy special assistant Ruth Coleman, many have recovered and have returned to their units to continue to serve and protect, again showcasing their passion to fulfill a responsibility chosen for them not by others, but themselves.

As we say goodbye to 2004 and greet 2005, may we remember, recognize, honor, and support our soldiers as they stand with their backs against the wall, protecting us and our children.

YUN'S

From Page 1

and surrounding villages.

Yoon said he would be keeping the Town House name under license and continue the promotions that Town House is well known for, like the "Dollar Days" sales. He assures people that they can continue to expect "the same quality of merchandise and service that they have come to expect from Town House for many years."

Ken Jones, who is currently off-island, was represented by Cadag in formalizing the sale.

It was not immediately known if Yun's Corp. will retain the current employees of Town House.

Cadag said that Jones only agreed to the transaction after he saw how Yoon carried on the Payless Market, feeling assured Yoon would operate the Town House business with the same commitment to the people of Saipan that he himself required of his managers.

Cadag said that Yoon's successful operation of the Payless Market when he acquired it in 2002 is "a benchmark of the kind of quality product and service that we would expect at Town House."

When asked why Jones is divesting himself of the Town House Department Store, Cadag explained that, when Jones sold his affiliated Payless Markets and closed the Town House on Guam a couple of years ago, it marked the beginning of his desire to get out of

the retail business and move upstream into wholesale operations.

"He had only now found someone to take on both the Payless Market and Town House retail operations on Saipan," Cadag said.

He said that Jones also finds it difficult to promote his wholesale operations while he kept up his retail store.

Cadag also pointed out that Town House Inc. would continue to be the landlord of and operate the Town House Shopping Center in Chalan Kanoa.

Cadag also said that Jones "want to take life a little easier after being one of the leading pioneers of the post-war rebuilding of Guam and Saipan, and enjoy the things that he loves to do."

"He just wants to watch his horses run and win," Cadag said of Jones.

Jones, however, will continue with his other business operations, including the Town House Shopping Center, Micronesian Brokers, Island Business Systems & Supplies, and the Aquarius Beach Tower, Cadag added. *(Jayvee Vallejera)*

DEATH

From Page 1

still missing, that number was almost certain to grow, amid fears that disease could bring a new wave of deaths.

The Indian government issued a tsunami warning about midday Thursday following aftershocks in the Indian Ocean region, although there were no immediate signs of turbulent seas.

"We got into a truck and fled," said 40-year-old Gandhimathi of Nagappattinam in Tamil Nadu state, who said authorities told her to leave her home. "We took only a few clothes and left behind all of our belongings, everything we had."

Sri Lanka's military later told residents there to be vigilant but not to panic, while coastal villagers climbed onto rooftops or sought high ground. "There is total confusion here," said Rohan Bandara in the coastal town of Tangalle.

Tsunami sirens in southern Thailand sent people dashing from beaches, but only small waves followed the alarms.

Meanwhile, military ships and planes rushed to get desperately needed aid to the ravaged coast of Sumatra, the Indonesian island closest to Sunday's quake. Countless corpses strewn on the streets rotted under the tropical sun causing a nearly unbearable stench.

Food drops began along the coast, mostly of instant noodles and medicines, with some of the areas "hard to reach because they are surrounded by cliffs," said Budi Aditutro, head of the government's relief team.

On the streets of Banda Aceh, a provincial capital in Sumatra, fights have broken out over packets of noodles dropped from military vehicles.

"I believe the frustration will be growing in the days and weeks ahead," U.N. Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland said.

The United States, India, Australia and Japan have formed an international coalition to coordinate worldwide relief and reconstruction efforts, President Bush announced.

"We will prevail over this destruction," Bush said from his

Texas ranch Wednesday.

The number of deaths in Indonesia stood at roughly 52,000, after the government raised its estimate by about 7,000 on Thursday. UNICEF, however, said it could rise as high as 80,000, with nearly a million children in need of assistance.

Sri Lanka reported 22,800 dead, India more than 7,300 and Thailand 1,800—though that country's prime minister said he feared the toll would go to 6,800. A total of more than 300 were killed in Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Somalia, Tanzania and Kenya.

The disaster struck a band of the tropics that not only is heavily populated but attracts tourists from all corners. Throughout the world, people sought word of missing relatives, from small-town Sri Lankan fishermen to Europeans on sand-and-sun holidays.

On hundreds of Web sites, the messages were brief but poignant: "Missing: Christina Blomee in Khao Lak," or simply, "Where are you?"

But even as hope for the missing dwined,

survivors continued to turn up.

A 2-year-old Swedish boy was reunited with his father days after the toddler was found alone on a roadside in Thailand's southern beach resort island of Phuket. In Sri Lanka, a lone fisherman named Sini Mohammed Sarfudeen was rescued Wednesday by an air force helicopter crew after clinging to his wave-tossed boat for three days.

The body count mounted as survey teams reached remote areas. Peter Ress, operations support chief for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said the toll could top 100,000.

Rescuers on Thursday plied the dense forests of India's remote Andaman and Nicobar islands, where authorities fear as many as 10,000 more people may be buried in mud and thick vegetation. Many hungry villagers were surviving on coconut milk, rescuers said.

Mohammad Yusef, 60, a fisherman who fled his village and was holed up at a Catholic church in the territory's capital Port Blair along with about

800 others, said all 15 villages on the coast of Car Nicobar island had been destroyed.

"There's not a single hut which is standing," he told The Associated Press. "Everything is gone. Most of the people have gone up to the hills and are afraid to come down," Yusef said.

Many villagers had not eaten for two days and said that crocodiles had washed ashore during the disaster, compounding the horror of more than 50 aftershocks since Sunday's quake.

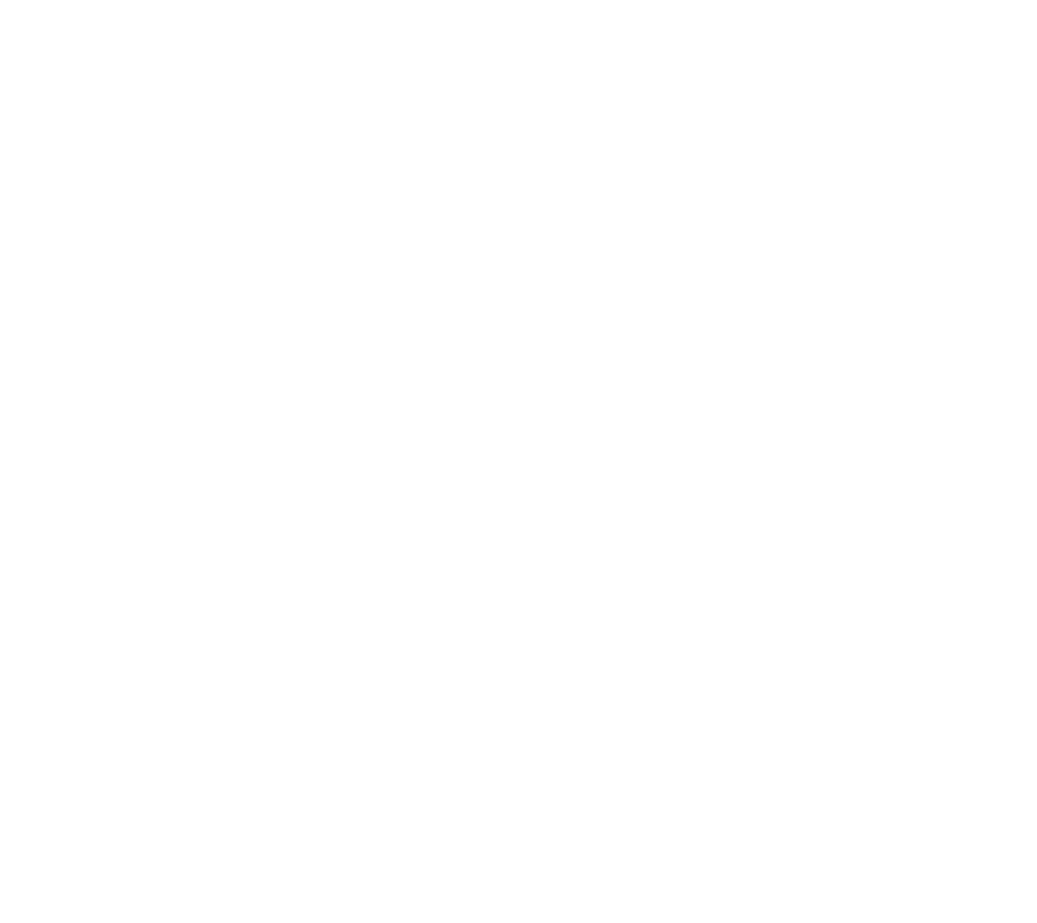
In southern Thailand, crack rescue and forensic teams from Australia, Japan, Germany and Israel fanned out in a race to find survivors and identify rapidly decomposing corpses.

"We have to have hope that we'll find somebody," said Ulf Langemeier, heading a team of 15 Germans who combed a wrecked resort early Thursday along with three sniffer dogs.

Langemeier said there's always a chance of finding survivors trapped under rubble when earthquakes strike on land, but "when waves enter a building you have no chance."







JOETEN MOTORS  
+BLUE

GREE

**BABY NEWS**

## Business

## Global economy to slow in 2005

Developing countries expected to show robust growth

By VIOREL URMA  
AP BUSINESS WRITER

**NEW YORK** (AP)—Buffeted by the soaring cost of oil, the world economy is expected to moderate in 2005, led by a slowing of the expansion in industrialized countries. Spurred by China and India, developing countries should enjoy solid growth. Predictions are that Asia will



lead the global economic race—though Japan is facing a slowdown—and that the United States still will outrun Europe.

The World Bank sees global economic expansion slowing in 2005 to 3.2 percent, from an estimated 4 percent in 2004.

The global factors contributing to the slower pace include high and volatile oil prices that have cut into incomes—thus moderating demand in many countries—a decline in investment growth due to higher interest rates, and concerns about

the burgeoning U.S. trade and current account deficits.

“The global economy is slowing, but it will likely keep expanding on the basis of a recovery in the U.S. and Chinese economies,” Bank of Japan Gov. Toshihiko Fukui said.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in its updated outlook in November, said oil

prices have already taken their toll on the major economies, prompting it to cut its growth forecasts for 2005.

Across the OECD’s membership of 30 industrialized countries, it expects growth of 2.9 percent next year, down from 3.4 percent forecast in May.

For the 12-nation euro zone, the Paris-based global economic think tank reduced its forecast for economic expansion to 1.9 percent from the 2.4 percent it predicted last spring. The OECD said persistently high oil prices and the rising euro were weighing on European exports to North America and China.

The organization still expected the United States to lead the global recovery, but it cut its growth forecast for 2005 to 3.3 percent from 3.7 percent. For Japan, it now forecasts growth of 2.1 percent down from 2.8 percent.

Although oil has fallen from its highs of \$55 a barrel in October, the OECD said that increased global demand, especially from emerging economies like China, meant oil prices would stay well above 1990s levels for the long term.

The World Bank predicts developing countries this year will turn in the strongest economic increase since 1974, expanding by 6.1 percent.

The economic strength in the developing world is being led by China, which is predicted to achieve growth of 8.8 in 2004, and India with expansion projected at 6.0 percent.

“This year—2004—is shaping up to be the healthiest year for developing countries in the last three decades. East Asia has come out of the crisis of 1997-98 stronger and more vibrant than ever; the countries of Europe and Central Asia are now almost completely out of the long shadow of transition from socialism and are growing more rapidly; and South Asian countries, on the strength of continuing reforms, are performing well,” World Bank Chief Economist Francois Bourguignon said.

In its “Global Economic Prospects 2005,” the bank predicts developing nations would turn in growth rates of 5.4 percent in 2005. Improvements in economic fundamentals should help boost economic growth per person in developing nations to an average of 3.5 percent per year between 2006 and 2015, the World Bank forecast, which would double the growth rate in the 1990s.

“Such growth would enable many developing countries to halve the incidence of extreme poverty by 2015,” it said.

In Asia, China’s economic boom is expected to continue to power fast expansion throughout the region, despite efforts by Beijing to slow 9 percent red-hot growth to a more sustainable level by cutting public spending and bank lending, and raising key interest rates.

Strong exports and domestic demand in the country of 1.3 billion are boosting trade throughout the region, a trend likely to continue as long as U.S. and European consumers continue to snap up made-in-China products.

Helped by India, East Asia is expected to remain the world’s fastest growing region with 7.1 percent growth in 2005, the World Bank projects.

By contrast, Japan’s economy appears headed for another slowdown, government data indicate. After more than a decade of stagnation, the world’s second largest economy has been witnessing a modest rebound, marking six straight quarters of expansion. But fears have been growing that a decline in exports will push down growth, while a rebound in consumer spending won’t be enough to keep the recovery going.

According to the Asian Development Bank, as export increase moderates and the gradual recovery in consumption continues, Japan will settle to growth closed to 1.6-2.0 percent. The World Bank projects a rate of 1.8 percent, down from an estimated 4.3 percent in 2004.

“The recovery in exports and production is slowing, but the mechanism for an economic recovery is still working, and the nation’s economy will move toward a sustainable recovery path,” Fukui, the Bank of Japan governor, said.

Pitfalls, however, remain. The declining dollar and high oil prices have sharpened fears of a global slowdown that could sap export growth. Such fears are sharpest in countries like Thailand and South Korea that are seeing domestic demand soften as households cut back after a consumer credit boom.

Many in Asia are watching to see if China will bend to pressure to relax its currency’s link to the U.S. dollar, a shift that could trigger similar adjustments by its neighbors. But Beijing is quashing speculation over a higher yuan, arguing that keeping its currency stable is the best way to keep growth on an even keel and insulate its fragile financial markets and banks from speculative shocks.

See GLOBAL on Page 20

GLOBAL

From Page 16

JOETEN MOTORS  
+BLUE





# A different take on Chinese food

By JOHN RAVELO  
REPORTER

Beginning New Year, Saipan residents can enjoy delectable Chinese cuisine that is rarely served in other restaurants on-island. A new restaurant, Yangtze River Chinese Restaurant, will officially open tomorrow on Beach Road, Garapan.

Its owner, Liu Zhiming, said he is venturing into the restaurant business to introduce a different class of Chinese food that may be new to most residents' taste buds.

"Chinese food is famous. But in this island, there's only one kind of Chinese food in restaurants—the Guangdong style," Liu said. "I'm opening the restaurant to bring a different Chinese food culture to Saipan."

Liu, a medical doctor from

China's Jiangsu province, named his restaurant after a hometown river, Yangtze. The river, which begins from Sichuan and stretches about 2,000 miles to Shanghai, is considered the third longest river in the world.

Yangtze River Chinese Restaurant offers Shanghai cuisine, which is typically not too salty nor too bland, as well as Sichuanese cuisine, which is rich in Chinese spices.

Liu said his restaurant's spices come directly from China to ensure the authenticity of every meal. The restaurant's head chef, Zhang Zaishou, has had more than 30 years of culinary experience in big restaurants in China.

Liu recommends that guests check out Yangtze's shrimp fried with hot oil and yuhua stones that is cooked in front of them. Those



who prefer spicy meals may try Yangtze's deep-fried pork ribs with salt and chili. The restaurant also serves duck cooked in beer and boiled with Chinese sauerkraut, and shredded pumpkin cake for dessert.

Yangtze is equipped with three private rooms that are suitable for private functions. It is also equipped with a karaoke system.

Although Yangtze's official grand opening will be held tomorrow, the restaurant has already opened its doors to customers, serving daily from 11am to 2pm and from 4pm to 2am.

For the month of January, Yangtze will offer all meals at 30-percent off the regular prices. Beginning February, all local residents can enjoy 20-percent price discount at the restaurant.

YANG TZE RESTAURANT  
CMYK



# Forecasters: Slower US growth in 2005

**WASHINGTON (AP)**—Despite soaring oil prices and a slumping dollar, the United States enjoyed a banner year in terms of economic growth in 2004, but the new year is likely to see a significant slowdown, private economists say.

Analysts believe that rising interest rates, the lack of new tax cuts and the lingering effects of higher energy bills will combine to slow growth next year.

“The performance of the U.S. economy in 2005 will be good but not great, at least in comparison to 2004,” said Nariman Behravesh, chief economist at Global Insight, a private forecasting firm in Lexington, Mass.

But what a year 2004 turned out to be in terms of overall growth rates.

Many analysts believe that

the gross domestic product—the total output of goods and services—grew by 4.5 percent for all of 2004. That would match the boom years of 1999 and 1997 and would be the fastest pace in two decades.

But even with sizzling GDP growth, consumer surveys indicate that many Americans did not feel particularly prosperous. Analysts attribute that to a job market that still has not recovered all the jobs lost since the start of the 2001 recession as businesses pushed hard to get more output from existing employees rather than hiring new workers.

Economists think this boom in productivity may be coming to an end as rising demand is forcing companies to hire more employees.

The latest survey of top economists done by the National Association for Business Economics is forecasting that 2.2 million jobs will be created in the new year, a slight improvement from 2004 with both years up significantly from the 61,000 jobs lost for all of 2003.

Analysts believe the current unemployment rate of 5.4 percent will fall gradually to just above 5 percent by the end of 2005. One reason they are not predicting a more dramatic decline is their belief that people who had given up looking for work will re-enter the labor market as they see hiring pick up.

A falling unemployment rate and growing jobs should translate into at least slightly stronger wage gains, many analysts believe.



AP  
Assemblyline robots weld the new 2005 Ford Mustang at the AutoAlliance International plant in Flat Rock, Mich., Monday, Sept. 27, 2005. Forecasting firm CSM Worldwide predicts GM, Ford and Chrysler will end 2004 with a total U.S. market share of 63.4 percent, including foreign brands such as GM's Saab and Ford's Volvo.

## Sales of existing homes surge on low rates

**WASHINGTON (AP)**—Sales of previously owned homes in November posted their best month on record as low mortgage rates enticed buyers to live the American dream.

The National Association of Realtors reported Wednesday that sales, at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, totaled an all-time monthly high of 6.94 million units, representing a 2.7 percent increase from October's pace.

While some other recent reports raised questions as to whether the high-flying housing market might be losing a bit of altitude, Wednesday's report suggested the sector is still humming along.

“So far, the stars have been aligned” for the housing market, said David Lereah, the association's chief economist, referring to low mortgage rates, good demand and a solid economic recovery.

The latest snapshot of demand for previously owned homes was better than economists were expecting. They were forecasting sales to hold steady.

The previous, monthly high record pace of sales—6.92 million unit—was set in June.

Sales for October totaled 6.76 million units, on an annualized basis, according to revised figures. That was slightly higher than initially reported.

## Stocks slump on holiday profit taking

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Surging oil prices and a weak dollar prompted a spate of profit taking Wednesday, pushing stocks slightly lower in light holiday-week trading. However, the minimal losses gave investors hope that Wall Street's yearend rally would still extend into January.

Crude oil futures moved higher after the Energy Department's latest weekly petroleum inventory report showed a dropoff in the nation's crude reserves, while reports of explosions in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh prompted a sharp rise on top of that. A barrel of light crude settled at \$43.64, up \$1.87, on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

The dollar fell to its fifth straight record low against the euro—good news, in the short term, for American exporters and tourism, but problematic for inflation should the dollar fail to gain ground in the long term.

“I think you're definitely seeing some money being moved off the table today,” said Steve Neimeth, senior vice president and portfolio manager at AIG SunAmerica. “But the economic data we've seen over the past month has been positive, and there's a lot of reasons to stay optimistic.”

MARATITA NEW YEAR  
CMYK

STOCK

ASIAN MARKETS

ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67
ASIA PACIFIC	12,345.67

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW

10,839.19

-25.36

S&P

1,213.45

-0.08

NASDAQ

2,177.00

-0.18

MONEY MARKET

Australian Dollar	1.2500
British Pound	0.6500
Canadian Dollar	1.2500
Chinese Yuan	0.1500
Euro	0.7500
Hong Kong Dollar	0.7500
Indian Rupee	0.1500
Indonesian Rupiah	0.1500
Japanese Yen	0.0050
Malaysian Ringgit	0.1500
New Zealand Dollar	1.2500
Philippine Peso	0.1500
Singapore Dollar	1.2500
South Korean Won	0.0050
Taiwan Dollar	0.1500
Thai Baht	0.1500

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# Crude oil prices surpass \$43 a barrel

Oil prices surged nearly \$2 a barrel Wednesday following two bombings in the capital of Saudi Arabia and after the U.S. government reported that winter fuel supplies shrank last week.

Light crude for February delivery rose \$1.87, or 4.4 percent, to settle at \$43.64 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

While down considerably from the October peak above \$55 a barrel, crude futures are 33 percent more expensive than a year ago, contributing to higher prices for gasoline, heating oil and other fuels.

Fears of supply interruptions in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Russia and Nigeria have underpinned higher oil prices throughout 2004, with markets especially

volatile due to surprisingly strong demand and a tight global supply cushion.

Oil prices were lower Wednesday morning as traders seemed comforted by forecasts calling for mild temperatures later in the week, allowing them to essentially shrug off a report about the nation's declining inventories of crude oil and distillate fuel, which includes heating oil.

But nighttime attacks launched by militants and a suicide driver in Saudi Arabia sparked an afternoon rally in oil prices. The rally was magnified by thin trading volume, analysts said, but accurately reflected the market's extreme sensitivity to instability in the world's top oil producing and exporting nation.

"This puts a higher floor under prices than we otherwise would have had," said John Kilduff, an analyst at Fimat USA in New York.

A suicide attacker tried to drive his bomb-laden car into the Interior Ministry complex, and militants set off another bomb and exchanged fire with police late Wednesday in Riyadh, capital of a kingdom at war with Muslim extremists.

The string of attacks came two weeks after al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden issued a message urging his followers to focus attacks on the kingdom. Militants have staged a number of attacks in recent weeks, seeking to show they are still a force after Saudi forces killed or arrested many senior terror suspects. *(AP)*

## GLOBAL

From Page 17

The U.S. economy is expected to grow about 4 percent in 2004, and economists forecast growth at or above the economy's trend rate of about 3.5 percent in 2005.

"This year it is on track to complete the third year of recovery with a strong 4 percent growth," U.S. Treasury Undersecretary John Taylor told business executives during a recent trip to India.

November's weaker employment report was a disap-

pointment, but employment growth has averaged 185,000 monthly since the start of the year, fast enough to take in labor market slack.

While the oil price has boosted day-to-day inflation, core inflation pressures have remained under control. Wanting to make sure inflation doesn't become a danger to the economy, the Federal Reserve has boosted interest rates five times this year, leaving the benchmark rate at 2.25 percent.

"The story of the U.S. economy continues to be one of sustained growth in an environment characterized by recent oil

price swings and a falling dollar," said Robert DiClemente, the head of U.S. economic analysis at Citigroup.

Taylor, however, expressed concern about the strength of the global economic expansion, saying he worried about high oil prices and a lack of exchange rate flexibility in some countries.

He said the huge current account deficit in the United States, a key factor in the plunge of the dollar, will narrow as the administration of President George W. Bush pushes policies to cut its budget gap and encourage private savings.

# Continental orders 10 new Boeings

SEATTLE (AP)—Continental Airlines Inc. said Wednesday it would become the first major U.S. carrier to buy Boeing Co.'s new 7E7 airplane, with an initial order of 10 jets.

Gordon Bethune, the Houston-based carrier's outgoing chairman and chief executive, said in a statement that the new airplanes would be "an important part of our international growth strategy."

Boeing said the deal would be worth about \$1.3 billion at list prices, although airlines typically negotiate steep discounts. The airplanes are to be delivered beginning in 2009.

Continental is the second U.S. airline to say it would buy Boeing's new plane. Primaris Airlines Inc., a little-known Las Vegas carrier which plans to offer low-cost business class service, said in October that it would buy 20 of the new planes. That carrier's 7E7s are to be delivered between 2010 and 2013.

Boeing said Continental had chosen the twin-aisle 7E7-8 model, which seats 217 in a typical three-class configuration and can fly nearly 9,800 miles.

Continental also said Wednesday that it would lease eight 757-300s from Boeing, and would receive six 737-800s it had previously agreed to lease in 2006 instead of 2008.

Boeing has logged 56 firm orders for the 7E7, including a launch order from All Nippon Airways. Including the Continental deal, other carriers have committed to another 66 7E7s, but those agreements have yet to be completed.

Boeing earlier set a goal of securing 200 orders by the end of 2004, but analysts have said it won't be too serious if the Chicago-based airplane maker fails to reach that goal.

Boeing's widebody 7E7, scheduled to enter service in 2008, promises greater fuel efficiencies and more cargo space than similar planes on the market today.

But the new model is expected to face stiff

## Continental's CEO Bethune retiring

HOUSTON (AP)—Love him or hate him, Continental Airlines CEO Gordon Bethune makes an indelible impression.

He's blunt. He's jovial, with a sarcastic wit. He has no patience for euphemisms. And this week the man credited with resuscitating Continental from near death a decade ago will hang up his wings.

"I don't know what I'll be doing, but I won't be dead," Bethune joked recently about his retirement.

Bethune, 63, had originally planned to retire in August 2006, when he turns 65. But last January he announced that at year-end he would leave the airline in the hands of his longtime second-in-command, Larry Kellner, in tandem with Texas Pacific Group president David Bonderman's departure earlier this year from Continental's board.

Texas Pacific once held a controlling interest in Houston-based Continental and helped the No. 5 carrier emerge from its second bankruptcy in 1993. But the group's controlling interest in America West and reported interest in buying stakes in other rivals drew conflict-of-interest fire from Continental's labor unions.

"There is a time to go and this is as good as any, but not with that pimple in our shoe," he said. "And so it was brokered in, I think, a civilized way ... Larry's got a good board. There's no cloud, there's no suspicion."

competition from rival Airbus SAS, which recently announced plans to launch its own new plane, the A350, to compete with the 7E7.

shell visor



JOETEN MOTORS  
+BLUE/RED



TOWNHOUSE  
+RED/GREEN





ICONNECT  
CMYK



Asia

Asia reels from disaster; holds landmark polls

By JOSEPH COLEMAN  
AP WRITER

**TOKYO (AP)**—As 2004 drew to a close, Asians were struggling to recover from a massive earthquake and resulting tsunamis that killed tens of thousands of people in 10 Asian countries and reached as far as eastern Africa.

In the last week of December, officials estimated the death toll was at 68,000, with the highest death tolls in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. Bodies were quickly buried to stave off disease.

Before the disaster hit on Dec. 26, Asians were reflecting on a series of landmark elections across the vast continent that were to settle questions of war and economy. Those issues are to dominate the region in the coming year.

Afghanistan held its first democratic election peacefully, despite threats of violence. In Malaysia, secular rulers trounced the Islamic fundamentalist opposition. The president of the Philippines won her mandate with a promise to fight terrorism.

For some countries, such as Japan, voters focused on their government's stand on the U.S.-led war in Iraq. In other countries, including the Philippines, terrorist attacks on home turf were at issue.

The elections illustrated Asia's steady march toward fuller democracy, while highlighting the challenges—political instability, enduring poverty and violence—that will continue to face the region in 2005.

By far the most closely watched vote was in Afghanistan, which took an important step in its post-invasion reconstruction with democratic elections in October to install interim leader Hamid Karzai as president.

The vote, which came three years after the U.S. invasion toppled the fundamentalist Taliban regime, passed off peacefully in the face of attack threats by rebels linked to the former rulers and al-Qaida terrorists.

The continuing violence, however, claimed more than 1,000 lives during the year, and the country's struggle with instability—and the hunt for terrorist leader Osama Bin-Laden—is sure to drive events over the next year.

Fundamentalism was also at issue in Malaysia, where Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's secular National Front coalition soundly defeated the Islamic opposition, winning 90 percent of the seats in parliament on March 21.

Terrorism and the war in Iraq were high on the agenda in Asia in 2004, and were set

to occupy the region in the new year as well.

In the Philippines, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, in power since 2001, won her first six-year mandate in the May 10 election on the promise of economic reform, job creation and fight against terrorism.

The vote followed the country's worst terror attack: In February, the Abu Sayyaf group claimed responsibility for bombing a ferry in Manila Bay, killing more than 100 people.

Indonesia confronted similar struggles as citizens went to the polls three times in 2004. After voting for parliament in April, the country elected retired general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in a landslide as president in September—the first time the country had chosen its leader directly.

The vote followed an al-Qaida linked suicide bombing that killed 10 people outside the Australian Embassy.

Violence also flared in Thailand, where tensions in the Muslim-dominated south exploded with a Jan. 4 attack by suspected Islamic separat-

ists on an army base. Troubles flared throughout the year, peaking with deadly riots in October.

In Japan, the pro-U.S. ruling coalition kept control of the upper house of parliament in July elections despite the growing strength of the top opposition party. Australian Prime Minister John Howard—another pro-Washington leader—triumphed in Oct. 9 elections.

While some countries were experimenting with wider democracy, others hewed to authoritarianism.

The deadlock in Myanmar, which is ruled by a military junta, showed few signs of easing in 2004, with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi remaining under house arrest. Deadly clashes between Vietnamese troops and Central Highlands tribes protesting religious restrictions triggered fresh criticism of Hanoi's human rights abuses.

In China, the central issue was clear: the economy.

Chinese leaders struggled in 2004 to rein in surging economic growth—expected to hit 9 percent—that they worried could ignite inflation in the coming year. That would threaten the country's frail banking industry just as it prepares to face the entry of foreign competitors.

Work continued on regional issues.

India and Pakistan, longtime rivals and sometime battlefield foes, began working awkwardly through a peace pro-



cess that both say will include the issue at the root of their distrust, the divided Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Multinational efforts to seek a negotiated solution to the impasse over North Korea's suspected development made little progress in 2004, with the North shunning a planned round of talks in Beijing in September.

Residents look at boats pulled ashore by Sunday's powerful tidal wave in the coastal town Galle town, Sri Lanka, Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2004.

AP



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# Tsunami survivors scavenging for food

By FADLAN ARMAN SYAM  
AP WRITER

**MEULABOH, Indonesia** (AP)—In town after town, the scene was the same from the helicopter taking one of the first glimpses of Sumatra's ravaged coast: whole villages ripped apart, covered in mud and sea water. The only signs of life were a handful of desperate people scavenging a beach for food.

When the helicopter—bearing an Indonesian military commander and an Associated Press Television News crew—touched down, townspeople ran down from the high ground where they've taken refuge. For some, it was the first contact they had with the outside world for days.

Some cried, others whooped for joy.

One refugee described what many across southern Asia have said they saw in the last moments Sunday, the puzzling sight of coastal waters disappearing, sucked into the tsunami about to strike: "The water in the sea pulled back, then fifty minutes after that the huge wave came back to us and destroyed



Volunteers cremate bodies recovered from under debris at Nagapattinam, a place hit by tidal waves, India, Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2004.

everything," the man said, without giving his name.

For some people on Sumatra's western coast, the destruction came even quicker. Sunday's earthquake, centered about 150 miles offshore, shook the area, then the gigantic waves it caused struck within a half hour—compared to 2 1/2 hours

for ravaged Sri Lanka, across the Indian Ocean.

Authorities counted thousands of bodies on the west coast Wednesday, bringing Indonesia's death toll to more than 45,000. But that was only the start, with military teams only just beginning to collect the area's dead.

Three-quarters of the Indonesian island's western coast was destroyed and some towns were totally wiped out, said Maj. Gen. Endang Suwarya, the military commander of Sumatra's hard-hit Aceh province, as he led the helicopter tour of the region.

"The damage is truly devastating," he said. "These people

are isolated and we will try and get them help."

From the helicopter, shattered villages were seen covered in muck or nearly completely covered by the sea.

Most of the simple wooden homes that typify the coastline appeared to be flattened, and those that still stood had their tin roofs torn off. A solitary mosque and green treetops were all that broke the water in one town.

The crew touched down in the fishing town of Meulaboh, where Sunday's disaster took a heavy toll. Officials had recovered 3,400 bodies, but they expected to find at least 10,000, which would amount to a quarter of Meulaboh's population.

At Calang, a nearby village that was inundated Sunday, people picked through debris amid overturned cars.

"We prayed and prayed that someone would reach us," said Sukardi Kasdi, a Calang resident.

But no one came and days later he made his own way out, setting out on a perilous six-hour trip in a small boat on a sea filled with bloated corpses floating on huge waves.

Now in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, he said survivors in Calang had passed their days praying and tending the injured with traditional medicine, wrapping wounds with bits of soiled cloth.

In Banda Aceh, bulldozers in a field shoved more than 1,000 unidentified bodies into mass graves. The corpses had been picked off the city's streets.

"We have to do this because of the smell and the health concern. We're facing a major health hazard if we leave them lying around," acting Aceh Gov. Azwar Abu Bakar said.

It could be days or longer before large-scale relief reaches Sumatra's western coast. Roads to the area are cut, airstrips are swamped, and the sea is too rough for many boats.

Nearly 100 doctors began arriving Wednesday in Banda Aceh—which also was severely damaged—to set up four emergency hospitals, and planes carrying aid packages landed in another big town, Medan. A navy flotilla also was on its way to the area as part of one of the world's biggest aid operations.

## Sri Lankan top rebel makes plea for aid

**COLOMBO, Sri Lanka** (AP)—Sri Lanka's reclusive Tamil Tiger rebel leader made a rare personal appeal Wednesday to international aid donors and U. N. organizations to help ethnic Tamils affected by the disastrous tsunami waves that hit the island.

"I solicit the support and magnanimous assistance of the international community and the U. N. agencies to help our people in distress," said rebel commander Velupillai Prabhakaran in a highly unusual personal statement posted on pro-rebel TamilNet Web site.

"The devastation caused by this tidal surge has exacerbated the sufferings of our people already affected by a war that continued for over twenty years and has torn asunder our nation," he said.

Prabhakaran has led a bloody civil war against the Sri Lankan state for two decades demanding a separate state for ethnic minority Tamils in the island's north and east. He rarely appears, speaks in public or releases statements to the media.

His annual policy statements delivered every Nov. 27 draw much interest locally and abroad.

In a gesture toward majority Sinhalese and Muslims, who are also a minority, Prabhakaran expressed his condolences to those who lost their families and property.

Nearly 55 million Tamils living in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu share cultural and family ties with Sri Lankan Tamils. Many of nearly 7,000 people killed in India were from Tamil Nadu.

Nearly 77,000 were killed

### Sri Lanka worries about disease outbreaks

**COLOMBO, Sri Lanka** (AP)—Officials warned about possible disease outbreaks in crowded refugee centers Wednesday, while trucks and cargo planes ferried food, drinking water and medical supplies to some of the 1 million Sri Lankans made homeless by Asia's tsunami disaster.

Bloated corpses were still being dragged from debris, rivers and lagoons as the official death toll reached 22,493.

At least eight people were infected with chickenpox at a school being used as one of 32 refugee centers in the northern Jaffna peninsula, lawmaker Gajan Ponnambalam said after visiting the Tamil-dominated area where at least 1,150 people died in Sunday's raging waves.

### Group: Bodies pose no threat of outbreaks

Dead bodies cannot cause disease outbreaks, the Pan American Health Organization said Wednesday, hoping to avert mass burials of tens of thousands of unidentified victims from the tsunami in Asia and Africa.

There is no danger of corpses contaminating water or soil because bacteria and viruses cannot survive in dead bodies, said Dana Van Alphan, an adviser to the organization's Office of Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief.

She said it was important for survivors to be allowed to identify loved ones and urged authorities in tsunami-stricken countries to avoid burying unidentified corpses in mass graves.

"I think that psychologically, people have to be given the chance to identify their family members," she said. "Whatever disease the person has while still alive poses no threat to public health in a corpse."

Van Alphan warned, however, that rescue officials handling recently deceased bodies should wear gloves to avoid contact with blood. (AP)

across south and southeast Asia after the massive quake Sunday off the Indonesian island of Sumatra sent towering waves crashing into coastlines thou-

sands of miles away.

Sri Lanka was among the worst hit losing 22,493 people, including many thousands of Tamils from the north and east coasts.

### UN official stands by some criticisms

**UNITED NATIONS** (AP)—U.N. humanitarian chief Jan Egeland praised rich nations Wednesday for their generosity in helping victims of the tsunami, but stood by his criticism that the rich do too little to assist the poor when there are no emergencies.

President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell took umbrage at Egeland's comment Monday: "We were more generous when we were less rich," he said. "And it is beyond me why we are so stingy, really."

The following day Egeland told reporters that his complaint was directed at no nation in particular, and didn't refer to the outpouring of assistance for the victims of the disaster—a point he reiterated Wednesday.

But the U.N. humanitarian chief, an undersecretary-general, said it was also his job to point out that the wealthiest countries are making too little effort to meet goals adopted by all 191 U.N. member states at the Millennium Summit in 2000 to reduce poverty and illiteracy and improve health care.

### Swedish boy, dad reunited after tsunami

**PHUKET, Thailand** (AP)—A Swedish toddler was reunited with his father Wednesday, days after being found alone in the aftermath of the deadly tsunami that swept Asia.

Hannes Bergstroem was found after the waves subsided Sunday and taken to a hospital on this resort island for treatment. His photo was posted on the Internet Monday.

The two-year-old's uncle saw the photo and claimed the boy Tuesday. On Wednesday the child was reunited with his father, Marko Karkkainen, at a hospital on the southern Thai island of Phuket where both father and son were receiving treatment.

Sri Lanka's civil war began in 1983 and killed 65,000 people before Norway initiated peace moves with a cease-fire in February 2002.

### 'Where are you?' resonates on web sites

**STOCKHOLM, Sweden** (AP)—On hundreds of Web sites worldwide, the messages are brief but poignant: "Missing: Christina Blomee in Khao Lak" or "Where are you?" Some are nothing more than names, ages, nationalities. Others list details of where loved ones were last seen. Some have pictures of the missing.

All convey the aching desperation of people from Italy to the United States seeking news about family or friends caught in the earthquake and tsunami waves that ravaged southern Asia.

Web sites and blogs have become the announcement boards and lost and founds for a disaster that has left many thousands of people unaccounted for, including 2,000 to 3,000 Americans and thousands more Europeans and other non-Asian visitors to the region.

On the British Broadcasting Corp.'s Web site, dozens of people posted notes seeking someone.

"Does anyone have news of my colleague Chuck Kercark and his wife Melinda and children Candice and Charlie (US citizens working in Kuwait, vacationing in the Maldives)?" asked Andy of Kuwait City.

Cheryl Boehm of Houston searched for her father, Jesse L. Adams. "He is an American citizen and is retired living on South Pattaya Beach. Please contact me with any information as I have no way to find or communicate with

him right now! Please help me find my Dad!!"

Another, Jaclyn Higgs of California, pleaded for help in finding her family. "I am desperately trying to contact my four-year old son Aidan Ashburn-Higgs and his father Jeffrey Ashburn who both flew into Thailand on Sunday. I have not heard from them since they left the airport in San Francisco. If you see this, please let me know you are safe."

Others sent text messages from across continents in a bid to find those who are missing.

In Sweden and Denmark, mobile phone operators stopped charging for mobile calls to and from Southeast Asia for 48 hours to make it easier for survivors to get in touch with their families.

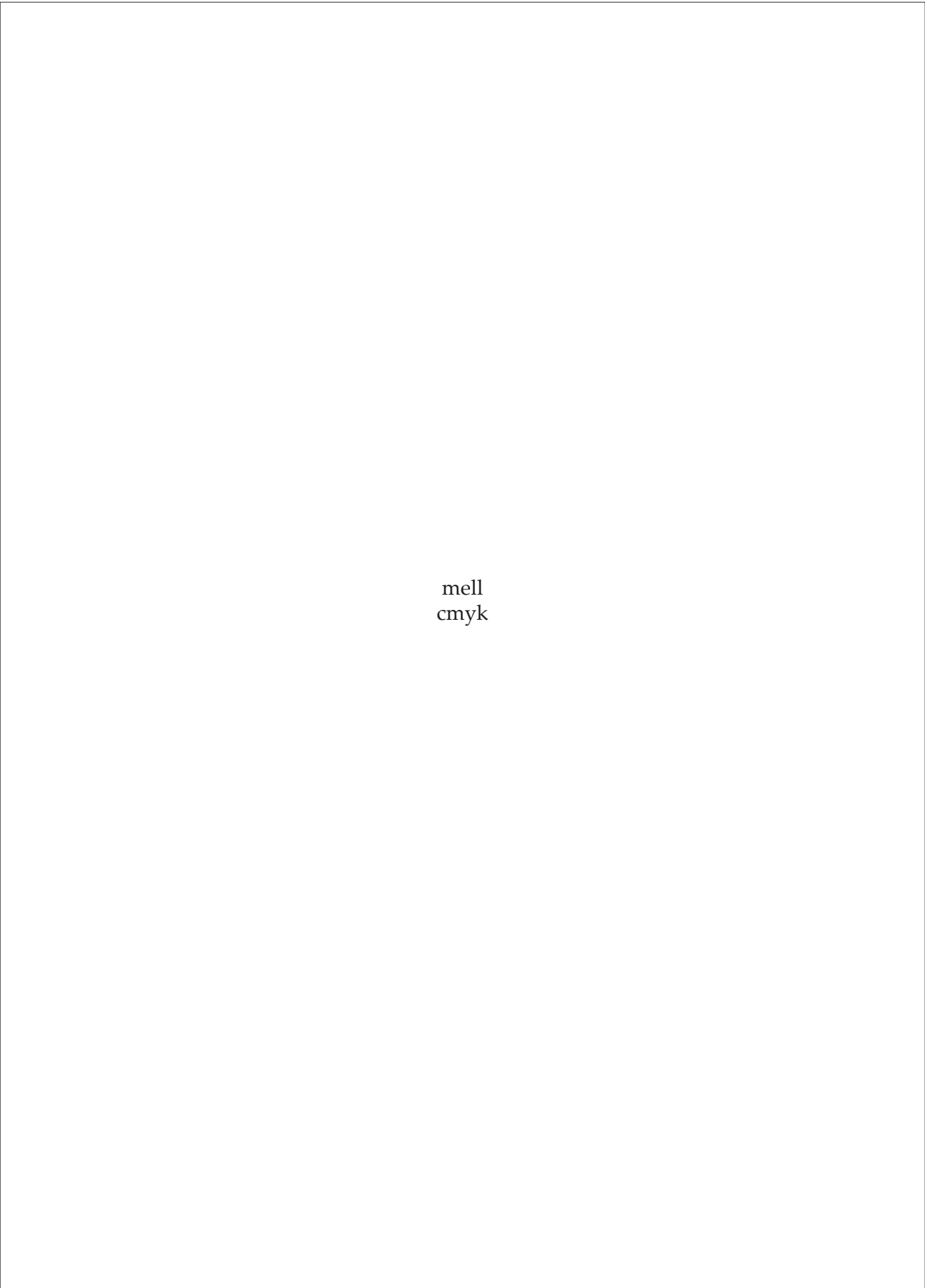
"We thought it would be a nice move from cellular phone companies," said Robert Neimanas of the Swedish group Telia's branch in Denmark.

The Swedish companies also sent text messages to all Swedish-registered phones in Thailand asking subscribers to call their families or the Swedish Embassy.

The State Department urged American travelers to get in touch with loved ones back home. "Call your mother," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Wednesday.

In the Nordic nations, blogs and Internet bulletin boards were rife with queries about people among the 2,700 missing Finns, Norwegians, Swedes and Danes.

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World

Year of terror in Iraq, Europe

By DONNA BRYSON  
AP WRITER

**CAIRO, Egypt (AP)**—It seems as if the terrorist battle ground was everywhere but in the United States this past year, but clearly America and its allies were the targets. Ever more violence can be expected in 2005 as the occupation of Iraq persists and terrorists remain determined to one day strike inside America again.

From car bombings that killed scores to ritualized executions meant to build fear one victim at a time, it was Iraq that bore the brunt of terror in the last year—with the targets foreigners or Iraqis working to rebuild the country under the U.S.-led occupation.

But Europe learned it was not immune in March, when explosions on commuter trains in the Spanish capital killed 191. In videotapes, Muslim militants said they acted on behalf of al-Qaida in revenge for Spain’s alliance with the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Three days after the attack, Socialists who had pledged to pull Spanish troops out of Iraq ousted former Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar’s conservatives. The Socialists quickly made good on their withdrawal promise, leading some to declare al-Qaida had pulled off a political victory over the United States.

An October terrorist kidnapping in Iraq also appeared aimed at voters in a European ally of the United States. Videotapes showed British hostage Kenneth Bigley pleading for help from British Prime Minister Tony Blair as Britain prepared for elections expected in 2005. In the end, Bigley was beheaded, as had been two Americans abducted with him.

On Dec. 6, both Americans and Saudi were reminded of how tough it is to stop terrorism as five gunmen—four of them Saudis—attacked the U.S. Consulate in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. Five consulate employees—all from the Middle east or Asia—were killed and 10 people, including two Americans, were wounded. Four of the attackers were killed and the fifth captured as Saudi forces retook the building.

Jonathan Stevenson, a Washington-based counterterrorism expert with London’s International Institute for Strategic Studies, notes the al-Qaida terror network and its sympathizers sought softer, U.S.-linked targets around the world after security was tightened inside the United States and al-Qaida was left without a base to operate from in Afghanistan.

But ultimately, Osama bin Laden’s movement hopes to pull off another spectacular strike in the United States, Stevenson said.

They have “reserved the United States for the highest value, most iconic attacks,” he said.

Bin Laden may be able to do little more than issue videotaped threats from his hiding place, but his allies are encouraged by each appearance, like one in November in which he for the first time clearly claimed responsibility for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and said the United States must stop threatening Muslims if it wanted to avoid “another Manhattan.”

While al-Qaida regroup, the U.S. invasion of Iraq provides an arena for Muslim extremists from around the world bent on fighting Americans. While foreign “holy warriors” are a minority among Iraqis fighting for nationalist reasons, the outsiders wield influence greater than their numbers.

The most prominent is a Jordanian high school dropout known as Abu-Musab al-Zar-

qawi, who confirmed what many had long suspected when he posted a Web pledge of loyalty to bin Laden in October.

Al-Zarqawi is said to have beheaded at least two kidnapped American civilians himself—Nicholas Berg and Eugene Armstrong. His group has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks on civilians and coalition and Iraqi forces.

His goal is to make Iraq ungovernable, robbing the United States of a chance to show it is serious about pledges to bring democracy and stability to the heart of the Arab world.

Iraq’s neighbors had opposed the U.S. invasion from the start. They now fear that young men from their countries who went to Iraq will come home battle-hardened, even more radical in their beliefs, and determined to overthrow regimes in places like Saudi Arabia—which suffered several terror attacks in 2004, notably the U.S. consulate attack.

The sooner U.S. troops leave Iraq, the sooner that threat to the neighbors will subside. But as 2004 ended, the United States announced plans to increase its troops in Iraq to an all-time high of about 150,000 by mid-January, hoping to bolster security before national elections on Jan. 30.

It was unclear when Iraq would be deemed calm enough for the Americans to leave. Anthony Joes, a guerrilla warfare expert at St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, said history shows that despite the weapons and manpower the U.S. wields, it faces an enormous challenge.

“Iraq is 29 times as big as Chechnya, where the Russians have been declaring ‘final victory’ for the past 10 years,” Joes said. “Iraq is 32 times the size of Northern Ireland, where for a quarter of a century after 1972 a few hundred criminals tied up 22,000 British troops.”

On the Internet sites where extremists share anger and ideas, the U.S. invasion is portrayed as proof bin Laden is right in arguing the United States wants to control Muslim land and humiliate Muslims. Iraqi civilians caught in the crossfire are portrayed as victims of American brutality. Iraqi leaders cooperating with the United States in hopes of building a democracy are portrayed as traitors to Islam.

“Now any radical young Muslim sees this expression of American power in the heart of the Middle East, puts two and two together and makes 12,” said Peter Lawler, a professor of international relations at Manchester University.

That radical young Muslim could live in Karbala or Amsterdam.

On Nov. 2, filmmaker Theo van Gogh, who had produced a television drama critical of how women are treated in some Muslim societies, was murdered in the Dutch capital. His throat was slit and he was found with a note secured into his chest with a knife threatening holy war against the Netherlands’ “infidel” government.

Authorities arrested an alleged Islamic extremist who holds Dutch and Moroccan citizenship, fueling right-wing calls to halt Muslim immigration to Europe—but also setting off soul-searching about how better to integrate Muslims into Western societies.

Lawler said young Muslims in Europe and elsewhere are angered by what they see as America’s bias toward Israel and its support of Arab dictatorships. If their anger can be assuaged by assurances the West will work for democracy in the Middle East, extremists will find it harder to recruit suicide bombers.

“That involves long-term, creative, subtle diplomacy,” he said.



CPA



# US launches offensive after Iraq ambush

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC  
AP WRITER

**BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)**—U.S. forces launched a new offensive Wednesday against insurgents in an area south of the capital dubbed the “triangle of death,” while militants ambushed an elite Iraqi police unit in a Baghdad neighborhood known for its loyalty to ousted dictator Saddam Hussein, killing 29 people, most of them civilians.

The militants set off a huge explosion in the staunchly Baathist neighborhood of Ghaziliya as a contingent of special police and national guards were about to raid a house late Tuesday after receiving an anonymous tip. The blast killed 22 civilians and seven officers, and damaged a dozen nearby homes, a police spokesman said.

Between 1,700 to 1,800 pounds of explosives were used in the blast, a U.S. military statement said. American and Iraqi troops searched the rubble for survivors through the night and rescued one civilian.

It was not immediately clear whether any of the casualties were guerrillas who appeared to have lured the police into the building. The area is a predominantly Sunni Muslim neighborhood where support for Saddam has traditionally been strong.

The fighting came as an insurgent group which claimed responsibility for the Dec. 21 suicide bombing of a U.S. base near Mosul—in which 22 people were killed—warned Iraqis not to take part in parliamentary elections scheduled for next month.

“We also warn everyone to keep away from all military targets, whether they were bases, American Zionist patrols, or the forces of the pagan guard, and police,” Ansar al-Sunnah said.

The group is believed to be made up mainly of Sunnis and has focused on targeting Americans and those viewed as collaborating with them. It has avoided outright civilian targets.

The latest warning followed Monday’s audiotape statement from al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden urging Iraqis to boycott the elections and praising attacks against Americans and those who cooperate with them.

President Bush denounced bin Laden’s appeal, saying the Jan. 30 election marks a crossroads for Iraq.

“The stakes are clear in this upcoming election,” Bush told reporters at his Texas ranch. “It’s the difference between the ability for individuals to express themselves and the willingness of an individual to try to impose his dark vision on the world,



People watch the rescue effort from the rubble of houses destroyed in a blast in west Baghdad Wednesday Dec. 29, 2004. Insurgents lured police to a house in west Baghdad with an anonymous tip about a rebel hideout Tuesday night, then set off explosives, killing at least 29 people and wounding 18. Seven policemen were among the dead.

on the people of Iraq and elsewhere. It’s very important that these elections proceed.”

Insurgents have intensified their strikes against the security forces of Iraq’s U.S.-installed interim government as part of a continuing campaign to disrupt the elections for a constitutional assembly.

Government troops are supposed to protect polling

stations, and the insurgents’ strategy—which includes attacking police stations, checkpoints and patrols—appears aimed at demonstrating the security forces are incapable of handling the job.

Brig. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, assistant commander of the 1st Cavalry Division that controls Baghdad, said Wednesday that U.S. troops

had begun a major anti-insurgency operation south of Baghdad, focused on areas such as around Mahmoudiya, a town about 25 miles south of the capital.

U.S. and Iraqi forces have come under repeated attacks by car bombs, rockets, and small arms fire in the area, dubbed the “triangle of death.” The latest operation followed a weeklong

campaign in November and early December to root out insurgents in the area.

U.S. commanders had hailed the November offensive to retake Fallujah as a major tactical victory, but violence elsewhere in Iraq has only escalated since the fall of the main insurgent bastion 40 miles west of Baghdad. The vast majority of the estimated 6,000 guerrillas based there apparently slipped out to northern Iraq and the area south of Baghdad, which includes Mahmoudiya.

“We believe that many insurgents that left Fallujah settled throughout areas in Baghdad and specifically in southern sector of Baghdad and north of Babylon,” Hammond said.

Top U.S. commanders have acknowledged that insurgent offensive is expected to continue at least until the elections.

In the northern city of Mosul, two car bombs exploded as a U.S. patrol was passing Wednesday, wounding two soldiers and damaging a vehicle, U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Paul Hastings said.

U.S. forces who returned to the scene took small arms fire and then called in helicopter airstrikes. Five insurgents were killed and four more U.S. soldiers were wounded, Hastings said.

## Iraq faces profound shift in power, more troubles ahead

**BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)**—Iraq in 2005 faces the likelihood of the most profound shift of political power in its modern history, while struggling with an insurgency that has confounded U.S. strategists and their optimistic forecasts that preceded the war.

Starting with national elections on Jan. 30, Iraqis are supposed to go to the polls three times next year—first to choose a new parliament, then to decide on a new constitution and finally—if the charter is ratified—to choose yet another legislature by the end of the year.

The January ballot will be the first since the April 2003 collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime. And the vote in December will complete the steps envisioned by the Bush Administration to transform Iraq from one of the Middle East’s most ruthless dictatorships into a functioning, albeit flawed, democracy.

That’s a tall order for a nation of nearly 26 million people, a volatile Sunni-Shiite divide and large areas that are virtual no-go zones for Westerners, government officials and the country’s

own security forces.

If the plan works, the United States may be able to see a time when it can bring home substantial numbers of U.S. troops.

However, few of the optimistic predictions about Iraq—from jubilant Iraqis showering invading troops with flowers, to the vast oil revenues paying for the country’s own reconstruction, to Iraqis taking charge of their own security—have come true.

Instead, Iraq, already America’s bloodiest military operation since the Vietnam war, is awash not only in the wreckage of failed forecasts but also in tons of missing Iraqi weapons and ammunition feared to have fallen into the hands of insurgents.

This time last year, some American planners envisioned U.S. troops fading into the background while Iraqi police and soldiers dealt with the guerrillas. Last month, U.S. troops were locked in their most intense urban combat—for the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah—since Vietnam.

Instead of cutbacks, the Pentagon is boosting U.S. force levels to about 150,000 by mid-

January—more U.S. troops than invaded Iraq in March 2003.

Petroleum exports have lagged due to poor infrastructure, sabotage and a security situation which makes large-scale renovation projects too dangerous. The world’s most powerful military has been unable to stop suicide bombings on the 10 miles (16 kilometers) of highway from the center of Baghdad to the airport—much less protect the oil wells and the thousands of miles (kilometers) of pipelines.

If elections do take place, they are expected to shift power to the long-suppressed Shiite Muslim community, an estimated 60 percent of the population. That would spell the end of Sunni domination which predates the establishment of the modern Iraqi state after World War I.

Iraq would become the only Arab land with a Shiite-dominated government—an unnerving prospect for Arab countries with large and potentially restive Shiite populations. Only non-Arab Iran is currently under Shiite rule. Some urban, Westernized Iraqis shudder at the prospect of Tehran-style clerical rule, although key Shiite politicians dismiss those concerns as unfounded.

## 10 die as militants, Saudi police clash

**RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)**—Islamic extremists set off bombs and battled with police in the Saudi capital Wednesday night, leaving nine militants and one bystander dead and causing oil prices to jump as the insurgents signaled they will keep up attacks despite the kingdom’s crackdown on al-Qaida.

A car bomb was detonated by remote control near the Interior Ministry in central Riyadh—killing a bystander, according to Saudi TV—followed soon after by an explosion when two suicide attackers tried to bomb a troop recruitment center.

The gunmen who set off the ministry blast fled, but then engaged in a gunbattle with police in northern Riyadh that killed seven militants and wounded an undetermined number of

officers, police said.

The attacks came two weeks after al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden called on his followers to focus attacks on his homeland. While damage to the Interior Ministry was minor, it was a bold assault on the government body at the center of Saudi Arabia’s war on other Islamic extremists.

Prince Ahmed bin Abdel Aziz, the deputy interior minister, told Saudi TV the attackers were all Saudis. He said they were “terrorists (who) took a great risk, because they know that their end is imminent.”

The violence sparked a jump in oil prices in afternoon trading in New York, helping push the price of a barrel of light crude up nearly \$2 a barrel to \$43.64.

The first explosion went

off around 8:30 p.m. near the Interior Ministry, a huge modern high-rise in a complex that includes a luxury hotel. Two militants set off a car bomb by remote control in a traffic tunnel near the ministry, police said. A limousine driver was killed, Saudi TV said.

Shattered glass littered the ground near the ministry, and several damaged cars—including a blood-splattered taxi—sat outside.

A half hour later, a second explosion shook the city. Two suicide bombers tried to drive into a troop recruitment center about five miles away, but they came under fire from police and set off their explosives prematurely. The two bombers died, but there were no other reports of casualties.

## Protesters pressure Yanukovich to concede

**KIEV, Ukraine (AP)**—Beating drums and chanting “resign,” supporters of apparent presidential winner Viktor Yushchenko blocked his election opponent from presiding at a Cabinet meeting Wednesday as tensions persisted in this former Soviet republic.

Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich showed no signs of cracking, refusing to surrender his post and telling journalists he would challenge the results of Sunday’s runoff vote before the Supreme Court. Parliament

passed a no-confidence vote for Yanukovich on Dec. 1, but the law gives him 60 days to submit his resignation, and he has called parliament’s move illegal.

“It is a matter of my principles not to submit a resignation,” Yanukovich said. “I know why they insist on that ... they are shivering with fear.”

Yanukovich was declared the winner of a Nov. 21 presidential vote, but hundreds of thousands wearing Yushchenko’s orange campaign color massed in Kiev for day after day to protest elec-

tion fraud. The Supreme Court eventually annulled the ballot, forcing Sunday’s rerun, which preliminary results showed Yushchenko winning easily.

Yanukovich wanted to preside at a Cabinet session Wednesday, but about 1,000 protesters blocked the entrances to the government headquarters building. The ministers met later without Yanukovich at the Finance Ministry, said Vitaliy Lukianenko, spokesman for Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Mykola Azarov.



# Germany wants to suspend Indonesia debt

## *Pope calls for more relief efforts*

**VATICAN CITY (AP)**—Pope John Paul II on Wednesday renewed his call for global aid for victims of the mammoth tidal waves that killed tens of thousands in South Asia and left many more threatened by disease.

Hours after the earthquake-driven waves hit Asia and Africa on Sunday, the pope prayed for the victims and issued his first call for international relief efforts. The Vatican said Tuesday it had sent emergency aid to the worst-hit countries, including Sri Lanka, India and Thailand.

"News that keeps coming from Asia increasingly shows the enormous scale of the catastrophe that hit in particular India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand," the pope said Wednesday in a message read by an aide during his weekly audience at the Vatican.

"In the Christmas atmosphere of these days, I invite all the faithful and all people of good will to contribute generously ... toward people who have already been through a severe trial and are now exposed to the risk of an epidemic," he said.



Pope John Paul II kisses a child during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican, Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2004.

The pontiff said he was praying for both the dead and the living.

"I remain very close to them, with affection and prayer, in particular to those who are injured or homeless, while I entrust

the numerous people who have lost their lives to divine mercy," the message said.

Wednesday's audience came amid a busy holiday schedule for the ailing pontiff, and was the last one of the year.

**BERLIN (AP)**—German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder called on the Paris Club of creditor nations Wednesday to suspend debt repayments from countries ravaged by this week's earthquake and tsunamis in order to help them in their massive recovery efforts.

Such a debt moratorium would apply to Indonesia and Somalia, the only two of the 12 disaster-affected countries with substantial debt owed to the Paris Club, Schroeder said.

Germany will propose a repayment moratorium at a January meeting of the club, which groups 19 lending nations, including the United States, Japan, Russia and several European countries.

"This is a disaster of truly worldwide dimensions," the chancellor said. "We have to

ask ourselves how we can help the affected and countries in the medium and long term."

"Of the affected countries, Indonesia and Somalia have international debt obligations with the Paris Club," Schroeder said. "That is why Germany will propose ... helping both countries in the short term with a debt moratorium."

Indonesia suffered the worst—hit both by Sunday's earthquake and by the tsunamis it sent rolling across the Indian Ocean. Its death toll stood at more than 45,000 people. Somalia suffered around 100 deaths when the waves raced thousands of miles across the ocean to reach its shores.

The international Red Cross has warned that the total death toll across 12 nations could

eventually reach 100,000. Millions are homeless and large areas have been swamped underwater.

Paris Club Secretary-general Emmanuel Moulin also was unable to give details, but said that other countries affected by the disaster, such as India, Thailand and the Maldives, owed little to the Paris Club.

Somalia, an East African nation long riven by civil strife, has not paid any of its debt to the group for several years.

The Paris Club comprises Austria, Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Its next meeting is set for the week beginning Jan. 10.

## Abbas urges Israel to tear down barrier

**TULKAREM, West Bank (AP)**—Interim Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas made a campaign run Wednesday through West Bank towns living in the shadow of Israel's separation barrier, urging Israel to tear down the huge structure that he said would never help peace.

Abbas, the front-runner in the Jan. 9 presidential election, made the appeal in Tulkarem, a town of 40,000 on the line between Israel and the West Bank, blocked on two sides by the 25-foot-high concrete slabs of the barrier. Israel began building it to stop a wave of Palestinian suicide bombers who were infiltrating unhindered from the West Bank.

"I say to our neighbors ... no fence will bring peace or bring you security," Abbas told a rally

at a Tulkarem stadium just 500 yards from the barrier.

Meanwhile, in Gaza early Thursday, about 10 Israeli tanks entered the Khan Younis refugee camp in what the military said was a mission to stop militants from firing rockets and mortars at nearby Jewish settlements and Israeli army bases. Palestinians said Israeli tank fire killed three gunmen. Military officials said the air force fired missiles at two groups of militants.

The complex of walls, fences, trenches, barbed wire and electronic devices, still under construction, roughly follows the "Green Line," the 1949 cease-fire line that divided Israel from the West Bank until 1967, when Israel captured the territory.

In some places, however, the barrier is designed to dip

into the West Bank to include Jewish settlements, taking West Bank land and cutting Palestinians off from their farmland and services.

Palestinians say if the Israelis want to build a wall, they should keep it on their own side of the "Green Line." But Israel doesn't recognize the cease-fire line as a border.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon cites a letter earlier this year from President Bush, saying that borders should take into account population changes—a reference to Israeli settlement blocs.

International opinion about the barrier, however, almost unanimously backs the Palestinians. In July, the U.N. world court ruled the structure is illegal and must be dismantled. Israel ignored the advisory ruling.

## 4 indicted on charges of antiquities fraud

**JERUSALEM (AP)**—Four Israeli antiquities collectors and dealers were indicted Wednesday on charges they ran a sophisticated forgery ring that spanned the globe and produced a treasure trove of fake Bible-era artifacts, including some that were hailed as major archaeological finds.

Police said the ring forged what were presented as perhaps the two biggest biblical discoveries in the Holy Land in recent years—the purported burial box of Jesus' brother James and a stone tablet with written instructions by King Yoash on maintenance work at the ancient Jewish Temple.

Shuka Dorfman, head of the Israel Antiquities Authority, said the scope of the fraud appears to go far beyond what has been uncovered so far.

"We discovered only the tip of the iceberg. This spans the globe. It generated millions of dollars," Dorfman said. The forgers "were trying to change history."

Investigators warned that collectors and museums around the world could be in the possession of fakes, and scholars urged museums to re-examine items of suspicious origin. The forgery ring has been operating for more than 20 years, Dorfman said.

Scholars said the forgers were

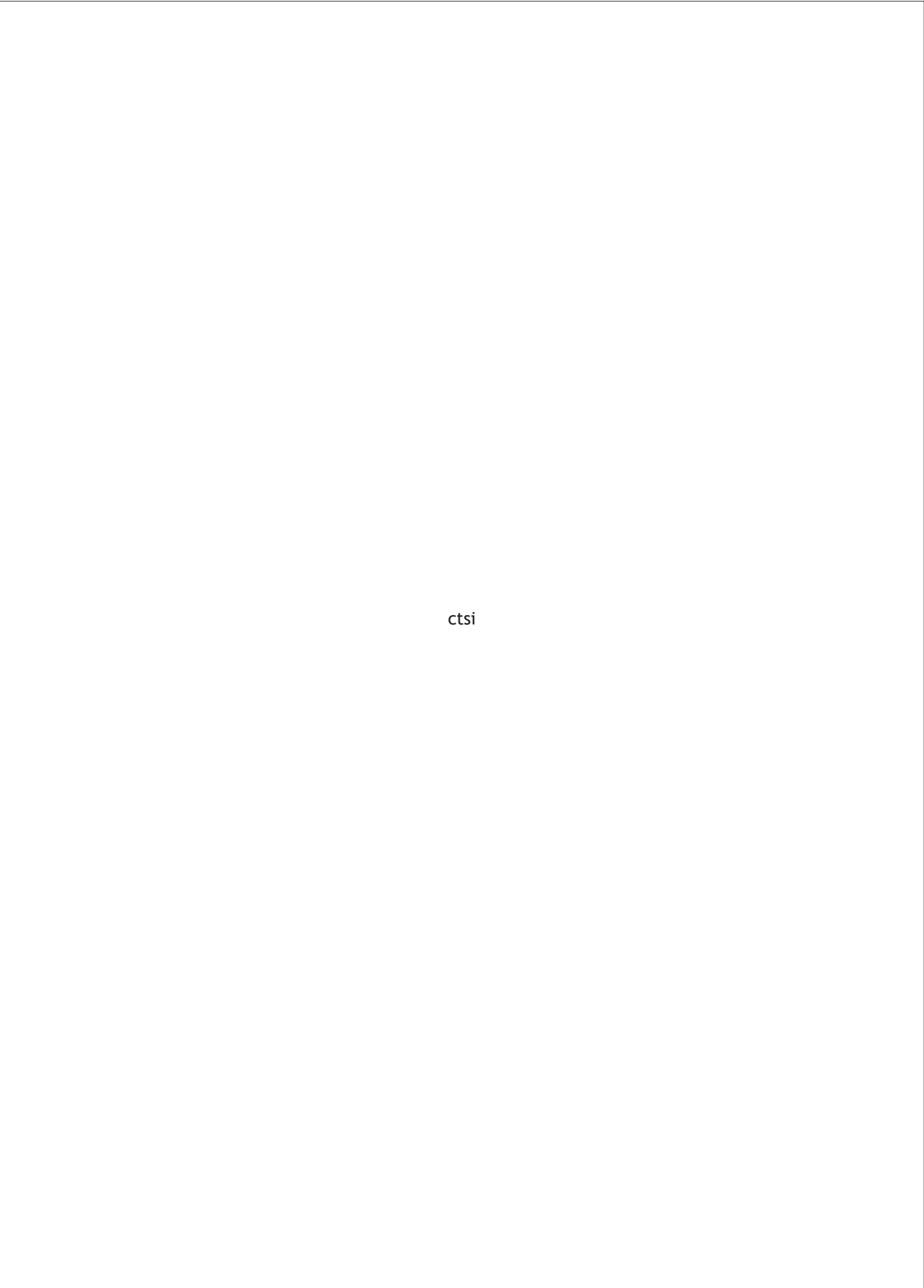
exploiting the deep emotional need of Jews and Christians to find physical evidence to reinforce their beliefs.

The indictments were announced at a joint news conference of the Antiquities Authority and the police, capping a two-year probe.

The forgers would often use authentic but relatively mundane artifacts, such as a plain burial box, decanter or shard, and boost their value enormously by adding inscriptions, Dorfman said. Then the forgers would try to recreate patina, or ancient grime, to cover the carvings, the indictment said.

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# Life & Style





## Life & Style

# What made us merry, what made us mad

By JANE ENGLE  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Americans this year took to the skies and highways in numbers not seen since 2000, the boom year before the bust that followed the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Even business fliers came back.

So let's celebrate with a list of who was naughty and nice this year to people on the go. For example, we paid more for hotels in New York (naughty) but flew there seemingly for pennies (nice).

Here's my scorecard if you will, for the travel industry in 2004:

### U.S. airlines were...

Nice, for giving us cheap fares. We got by with paying nearly 50 percent less, on average and adjusted for inflation, than we did in 1978, the year that the industry was deregulated, the Air Transport Association reported in July. Even airlines' attempts to add sorely needed fuel surcharges mostly fell under the wheels of low-cost carriers and penny-pinching passengers.

Naughty, for charging us \$5 and \$10 to book seats by phone or in person.

Nice, for reducing walk-up fares and not making us fly round trip or stay Saturday night to get good prices—even if these courtesies were often limited to routes where so-called legacy carriers confronted low-cost competition.

Naughty, for taking back extra inches of legroom. Saying it needed the fares, American announced it would reinstall some seats it took out only four years ago in its "More Room Throughout Coach" program. Just when we were getting comfy.

Nice, for putting more self-service check-in kiosks at airports. It saves us time. And it saves airlines money.

Naughty, for reducing food service on domestic flights. Among the cutbacks: US Airways, which earlier ended free meals in coach, stopped offering special meals, such as vegan and gluten-free, even in first class. American indicated it will end free meals in coach next year.

Nice, for expanding electronic ticketing. By the end of next year, two big alliances of U.S. and foreign carriers—the Star Alliance and Sky Team—plan to have agreements among all their members that will enable passengers to use a single e-ticket when their itineraries include more than one airline.

### The lodging industry was...

Naughty, for raising room rates. OK, they crawled up less than 4 percent at U.S. hotels overall in 2004, according to the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, after three years of slipping and stagnation. But rates in New York shot up more than twice as fast as the nation as a whole, and Las Vegas was raking it in too. And really—\$40 per day to park your car at an urban hotel? \$4.50 for a bottle of water in your room? Not a jolly prospect.

Nice, for otherwise treating us well. Nearly 70 percent of readers surveyed by Consumer Reports magazine said they were "very" or "completely" satisfied with their hotel stays—up from 60 percent in 2001. The lodging industry also scored a respectable 71 of 100 points in the American Customer Satisfaction Index, produced by the University of Michigan Business School and other entities.

### The cyber-world was...

Nice, for giving us more one-stop shopping,

including Mobissimo.com and Kayak.com. These aggregators, an idea pioneered by SideStep, scour gobs of Websites for the best airfares, saving us many mouse clicks.

### Congress was...

Naughty, for making us pay to play in our forests and on other federal lands. I'm talking about the Adventure Pass program, which Congress last month voted to extend for a decade. Yes, I know our forests are underfunded. But the government should allocate more money instead of dinging users at the doorstep. What's next? Pay toilets?

Nice, for aiding passengers who may be stranded by a bankrupt airline. Congress on Dec. 8 renewed a law that requires other carriers, on a standby basis, to honor these fliers' tickets. The law has plenty of fine print and loopholes, but at least it puts a \$25 one-way cap on fees that airlines can charge in this situation.

### NCL Corp. was...

Naughty, for converting the genteel art of tipping into a mandatory service charge on its new Pride of Aloha ship sailing the Hawaiian islands.

Nice, for suspending, at least temporarily, the \$10-per-day charge after persistent service problems.

### The big picture...

On balance, I'd have stuffed a few more oranges than lumps of coal in the stockings of the travel industry and its regulators.

So happy traveling to all this holiday season.

And to all a good flight.



## Professor proposes new way to track the days of our lives

By ERIKA NIEDOWSKI  
(C) 2004, THE BALTIMORE SUN

If Richard Conn Henry has his way—and he concedes he almost certainly won't—the coming year will be the last with 365 days.

The Johns Hopkins University physicist and astronomer has devised a better calendar, he believes, than the one that has sufficed for more than four centuries—the one that graces office desks and hangs on walls everywhere (including in Henry's kitchen).

The alternative might sound drastic, if not far-fetched: Some months would lose a day. Others would gain one. Leap years would be abolished in favor of a week-long "mini-month" tucked between June and July every five or six years.

And most years would end after 364 days.

But the result, Henry says, would be a stable calendar—identical from year to year—that would make for much more convenient planning.

Under his scheme, if you were born on a Tuesday, your birthday would always fall on a Tuesday. Christmas would always be on a Sunday, the Fourth of July on a Wednesday. Election Day wouldn't be determined by clumsily calculating "the first Tuesday

after the first Monday" in November. It would always be on Nov. 8.

Proponents of a fixed calendar say it also would reduce costs to businesses, schools and other organizations; they wouldn't need to buy new ones every year. People might tire of the pictures, sure—the same antique cars, quaint lighthouses, Clydesdale horses—but think of the trees it would save!

Henry, who is director of the Maryland Space Grant Consortium when he's not trying to manipulate time, has joined a long line of would-be calendar reformers who date back to Julius Caesar and beyond.

Among their efforts—the Thirteen Moon Calendar, the Ecliptic Calendar, the Long-Sabbath Perennial Calendar and the 60-Week Calendar.

Unlike many of his predecessors, however, Henry initially was motivated by his own convenience a few years ago when he realized that season after season, he was teaching the same courses at Hopkins. He was using the same textbooks. He was assigning the same homework. Yet he always had to change his syllabus to reflect the new year's dates.

At first, he thought, that's just the way it has to be. Then, he said, "I made a dreadful mistake: I looked into it."

Under Henry's proposal—de-

veloped using a complex computer program he devised—30 days hath January, February, April, May, July, August, October and November. All the rest have 31.

"I am heartbroken over Halloween, because I love Halloween," he says, referring to the fact that Oct. 31 no longer would exist. Still, he thinks the holiday could be switched, without much trouble, to another day.

When he presented a paper on his proposed universal calendar at a meeting of the American Astronomical Society about a year ago, two young women approached him afterward. One was quite fond of his idea; the other, well, wasn't.

The critic happened to like it when her birthday occasionally fell on a weekend. Under his new calendar, she told him, she would be forever consigned to turning older on a Thursday.

But Henry, who at 64 deems himself an "old guy" who no longer pays attention to birthdays, has an answer. "You control when your birthday is celebrated," he says in earnest. "You don't have to have the calendar do it."

The Gregorian calendar used in the United States and much of the Western world was instituted in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII. He modified a calendar Julius Caesar had adopted in

46 B.C. to bring it into sync with the seasons. Ten days were dropped that year—Oct. 15 directly followed Oct. 4—and the rule for determining leap years was altered.

Leap years are necessary every four years for one maddening reason: An Earth year contains an uneven number of days.

"365.2422," to be exact, says Henry, who works in a discipline that requires such precision.

His calendar would eliminate leap years altogether and institute a seven-day period he has dubbed "Newton Week," in honor of Sir Isaac Newton (Henry is open to other suggestions about what to call it). Newton Weeks would occur irregularly: in 2009, 2015, 2020, 2026, for starters.

"I would like everybody to have a paid vacation on Newton Week," says Henry. "It comes so rarely—every five or six years—let everybody have a week and have a good time."

He placed Newton Week between June and July rather than stick it at the end of December, he says, because he feared end-of-the-year partying might get out of hand.

Henry has embarked on an admittedly long-shot campaign to get his scheme—called the Calendar-and-Time plan because it also espouses a shift to

"universal" time—adopted by Jan. 1, 2006. It would be a seamless transition, he says, because New Year's Day would fall on a Sunday under both the current and proposed calendar.

So far, the so-called International Association for 2006, for which Henry serves as president, has attracted vice presidents in five countries—including England, Pakistan and India—as well as four U.S. states.

"Have you ever not bought that great calendar since it was for 2004, but it was already summer?" asks Carl Bassett, a supporter of Henry's plan who represents the state of Georgia in the association. "Or, it's October and you need a new day-timer. You buy one, only to immediately throw away three-quarters of the pages."

Henry concedes that switching to a new calendar would be costly, probably on the order of making worldwide preparations for Y2K. But, he's quick to point out, it would be a one-time expense.

Henry thinks the world might be a better place—albeit marginally—under a universal calendar. But he admits a more personal reason for pushing the reform, too.

"I don't claim any originality to this," he says. "My only interest in this, quite frankly, is to make my own life easier."



# Music provided best jaw droppers of 2004

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY  
AP MUSIC WRITER



**NEW YORK** (AP)—Maybe 2004 seemed more scandalous than past years because we had double the ingredients: Two scandalous Jacksons! Two ditsy Simpsons! Two Britney weddings!!

Was it double the fun? Only if you delight in cringe-worthy moments. Here's the rundown of the wacky moments only the American music industry could provide:

**A Simple "Not Guilty" Would Have Sufficed:** As if the former King of Pop's legal troubles weren't surreal enough, Michael Jackson made it weirder—as you knew he would. After one courtroom appearance, he jumped on top of an SUV to wave to adoring fans, then proceeded to shimmy like it was an outdoor concert. Or maybe that's what his lawyers told him to get him to show up.

**Bad Career Move of the Year:** Though we could keep it in the Jackson family and give it to baby sis Janet for her Super Bowl mammary display, the winner is Ashlee Simpson's performance malfunction on "Saturday Night Live." She got lip-sunk when the music and her vocal track went their separate ways, revealing that she wasn't really singing. Given her vocal abilities, faking it probably would have been a smart move.

**Breast in Show:** Janet Jackson's striptease made her bare breast so famous, most Americans could pick it out of a lineup. But instead of boosting her upcoming album, she saw her A-list star power downgraded to B-minus. By midyear, she was doing "Will & Grace" to get publicity—and her album didn't even break platinum.

**Timber-Fake:** If you're going to boldly expose a woman's breast on TV, be a man and stand by it! Instead, bodice-ripper Justin Timberlake—who initially laughed about it backstage to TV cameras—later professed to be shocked and embarrassed after the outrage threatened to keep him off the Grammy telecast. Once a Mouseketeer, always a Mouseketeer.

**Even J.Lo Marries Just Once a Year:** Britney Spears has had many "Oops!" moments—most of her albums, for example—but she topped herself with two

tacky nuptials that even Star Jones Reynolds would have disavowed. The first, to childhood buddy Jason Alexander, after a late-night in Las Vegas, could maybe be excused to wild youth—especially since it only lasted 55 hours. But what's her excuse for the second, to backup dancer Kevin Federline, who left his babymama for her? Brit even bought her own engagement ring, though Federline will surely pay her back—once she gives him his allowance.

**'Til Ratings Do Us Part:** Jessica Simpson and what's-his-name gave us yet another season of "Newlyweds" despite constant tabloid talk of marital strife ("Nick Cheating Scandal!" "Jessica Not Wearing Ring!"). But hey, even if they do part ways, there's always "The Exes" as a reality show option.

**The Most Famous No-Talent Since Paris Hilton:** William Hung was the joke that wouldn't end. Not only did his mangled version of "She Bangs!" make him the most famous "American Idol" reject since Frenchie, he parlayed his vocal handicap into a music video, concert appearances and even his own album. Somewhere, Justin Guarini is crying.

**Feud Of The Year:** You'd have thought Michael Jackson still had a career given the fit he pitched when Eminem mercilessly parodied him in the video for "Just Lose It." But it's hard to call this one a feud when Eminem wisely decided to let Jacko implode on his own. No, the award here goes to R. Kelly and Jay-Z, who already didn't like each other that much when their joint tour kicked off in the fall. They ended up in a bona fide hatefest after R. Kelly fled the stage for no good reason in New York City, then was allegedly maced in the face by one of Jay-Z's posse. Happy people, indeed.

**Best Way to Speed Up an Awards Show:** There were more empty seats that A-list stars at the Vibe Awards—many bolted after someone punched Dr. Dre in the face and a chair-throwing melee ensued. Note to Grammy staff: Keep R. Kelly and Jay-Z a few rows apart in 2005.

Britney Spears appears as a presenter Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2004 during the Billboard Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.

AP

## Top 10 albums of 2004

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY  
AP MUSIC WRITER



**"Confessions,"** Usher: This was the most overplayed, overexposed album of the year—and the best. It's hard to remember when a heartbreaking cad sounded so appealing: From the breakup anthem "Burn" to the scandalous title track, Usher wooed listeners with his sensuous tenor. Expertly crafted grooves and artful storytelling didn't hurt either. Though Usher's been one of R&B's brightest young stars for a while, this album put him on top the entire music world, deservedly so.

**"The College Dropout,"** Kanye West: Though technically a rap album, at its heart, West's stunning debut was every bit soul music. Its songs spoke to struggles of everyday life—from the small to the gargantuan—through gripping lyrics, biting satire and David Chapelle-worthy skits. Cleverly conceived and excellently executed, West's album provided a rich portrait of street life in a genre built on caricatures.

**"Virgin Ubiquity: Unreleased Recordings, 1976-1981,"** Roy Ayers: This sweet collection of the jazzman's lost recordings is a wonderfully orchestrated symphony of funk and soul. Songs like "Sugar" will make you wanna dust off your old disco ball (or steal it from your mom's closet), while "I Really Love You" will make you want to get down in a whole 'nother fashion. Though the music definitely has that '70s sound, it doesn't sound dated—simply classic.

**"Rebel Soul Music,"** Martin Luther: Like the black rock scene itself, Martin Luther—one of its most talented stars—has been producing sizzling music that's gone pretty much unnoticed. But it should not go unheralded. "Rebel Soul Music" recalls the heavenly voice of Seal, the guitar-infused funk of Prince and the sexuality of D'Angelo, but it still sounds original (unlike a lot of neosoul artists, who seem to be borrowing too liberally from the past). The pressure-cooker "Growing Pains" and the sexy "Truth or Dare" are standouts on a stellar album.

**"One Blood: Una Sangre,"** Lila Downs. Though she's known as Mexico's leading lady of song, Downs crafted an album that encompassed all different genres and worldly influences with her latest, from blues to even a little rap. But it's not some hodgepodge attempt to cross over, and she doesn't sacrifice her gorgeous, Latin-inflected melodies in the process. What she ends up with is an album that shows how universal music truly is.

**"Launchpad,"** Particle: This jam band takes you on an intergalactic head trip with their trippy album. No spacecraft needed here, though, just dizzying guitar solos and a pulsating rhythm section. By the time the record ends, you'll be wanting another ride.

**"Rbg: Revolutionary But Gangsta,"** Dead Prez: Like a lot of other artists, Dead Prez put out a record about war in 2004, but it had nothing to do with Iraq. Instead, the fiery rappers put their focus on the war they believe the government is waging on the black community. They paint a bleak portrait, but far from taking the voice of the victim, the group offers compelling, and certainly controversial, ways to battle back. And with a blistering lyrical assault, they've provided the perfect rallying cry for their troops.

**"Afrodisiac,"** Brandy: At this point, many of you will surely be saying: "Brandy came out with an album this year?" Her third disc, "Afrodisiac," came and went faster than her faux marriage—a shame, because this disc, with major production work by Timbaland, was surely her best. From the tell-all, autobiographical themes to the hypnotic beats, this album captures your attention from the first note and refuses to be ignored. But you've got to hear it first.

**"The Grey Album,"** Danger Mouse, Jay-Z and The Beatles: Danger Mouse must be kicking himself right about now: The DJ/producer cleverly mixes the lyrics from Jay-Z's "Black Album" and the music from legendary Beatles "White Album" to create the widely downloaded "The Grey Album," one of the most ingenious mashups to date—then Jay-Z and Linkin Park make a subpar mashup that goes on to sell almost 400,000 copies in its first week. Go figure. But he can take solace that his was the better project, and, being free, was probably heard by many more.

**"Finally Woken,"** Jem: Yes, this British import does sound awful lot like fellow U.K. songstress Dido, at least vocally. But what sets her debut apart is now how similar she is—and how different. She entranced listeners with a gorgeous, delicate blend of haunting ballads, chill-out grooves and whimsical tunes. The melodies are lushly arranged, and her lyrics are just as ear-catching. In a year when we heard more female voices from the alternative music scene, Jem's was the strongest.

### Honorable Mentions:

- "Ray!" Soundtrack, Ray Charles
- "Free Yourself," Fantasia
- "Oumou," Oumou
- "Get Away From Me," Nellie McKay
- "Yo-Yo Ma Plays Ennio Morricone," Yo-Yo Ma.



WALLACE



# Jerry Orbach of 'Law & Order' dies at 69

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Jerry Orbach had a gift for charming audiences his entire career—first as a song-and-dance man who starred in musicals on and off Broadway, then for 12 years as a sharp-tongued cop on TV's "Law & Order."

Along the way, he made films as varied as the gritty crime drama "Prince of the City" and the smash romance "Dirty Dancing."

Orbach, who died of prostate cancer Tuesday in Manhattan, was beginning another chapter at age 69: He had taken his signature role as Detective Lennie Briscoe to NBC's upcoming spinoff "Law & Order: Trial By Jury."

With his hangdog puss and loose-limbed gait, Orbach was unmatched at playing the street-smart tough guy. A quintessential New Yorker, he personified his city's well-worn but implacable edge, embodying the Big Apple like few other actors.

Former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani called Orbach "a friend to all New Yorkers" and "a devoted ambassador of the city."

Orbach's long-time "Law & Order" co-star, S. Epatha Merkerson, remembered him as "as a real good guy who knew everything and everybody. He had a real lust for life and the work he did, and it permeated throughout the set."

Of course, he presented quite a different picture as the world-weary, recovering alcoholic Briscoe. But even as Briscoe drooped from the burden of everything he'd encountered, both on and off the job, he sized up life with sar-



In this undated publicity file photo released by NBC, Jerry Orbach, right, and Jesse L. Martin, left, appear in this scene from "Law & Order".

castic asides. For instance, standing over a fresh body on which a receipt from a fancy restaurant was found, he muttered: "Dinner for two? Hope he enjoyed it."

Orbach had announced in early December that he had prostate cancer. His manager said at the time that he had been receiving treatment since spring, but declined to disclose any particulars about the seriousness of his condition.

Orbach is expected to appear in early "Trial By Jury" episodes when the show premieres in March.

"I'm immensely saddened by the passing of not only a friend and colleague, but a legendary figure of 20th-century show business," said Dick Wolf, creator and executive producer of the four "Law & Order" series.

"He was one of the most honored performers of his generation. His loss is irreplaceable."

Orbach started his career as a hoofer who also could carry a tune. Beginning in the 1960s, he starred on Broadway in hit musicals including "Carnival," "Promises, Promises" (for which he won a Tony Award), "42nd Street" and "Chicago."

"He was an anchor who brought style, security and razzle-dazzle to our original 'Chicago' company," said Chita Rivera, Orbach's co-star in that 1975 production. "He was a swell guy."

In 1960, he was in the original cast of the off-off-Broadway hit "The Fantasticks," playing the Narrator who sang the evocative "Try to Remember." That show went on to run for more than 40 years.

## 'Jeopardy!' to hold 'Super Tournament'

**LOS ANGELES (AP)**—If winning more than \$2.5 million wasn't enough, "Jeopardy!" whiz Ken Jennings will have a shot at winning an additional \$2 million—but the competition will be tougher this time around.

Producers of the game show announced Tuesday a "Super Tournament," which will pit Jennings in a final match against two survivors of a competition between nearly 150 past five-time winners.

Host Alex Trebek called the tournament the "quest for Ken."

"Ever since Ken started his amazing run, people have been speculating on how some of the past 'Jeopardy!' players would do against him," Trebek said in a statement. "We're answering that question."

Jennings, too, was anxious about the challenge.

"I can't wait to see who I'll be up against in the finals," he said.

Jennings earned \$2,520,700 after a 74-game winning streak. He was beaten by California real estate agent Nancy Zerg.

The matches will begin airing in February or March, and the finals will air in May, said "Jeopardy!" publicist Jeff Ritter.

## Dick Clark remains hospitalized

**BURBANK, Calif. (AP)**—"American Bandstand" icon Dick Clark plans to watch his New Year's Eve show from the hospital bed where he is recovering from a stroke.

Clark, 75, suffered what was described as a mild stroke and has been hospitalized since Dec. 6. Regis Philbin is filling in for America's oldest teenager on ABC-TV's "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve 2005" on Friday.

"Even though I won't be in New York this year, I will be watching 'New Year's Rockin' Eve' on TV and there's one tradition I intend to maintain," Clark said in a statement Wednesday.

"As I always have in the past, at midnight I plan on kissing my wife Kari and

wishing her a happy new year," Clark continued.

Clark has been "doing some rehab," publicist Paul Shefrin said without elaborating. He wouldn't give any details about the impact of the stroke or discuss whether there was paralysis or impaired speech, as reported in the supermarket tabloids.

"I will neither confirm nor deny what's in the tabloids but there are things in the tabloid reports that are false," Shefrin said, noting, "I talked with him last night."

The spokesman insisted there is no cause for alarm and said doctors are thrilled with Clark's progress. For privacy reasons, the name of the hospital has been withheld.

"He's still in the hospital

Lights on Broadway marquees were expected to be dimmed for one minute at curtain time Wednesday night in Orbach's memory.

Among his film appearances were parts in Woody Allen's "Crimes and Misdemeanors," "Dirty Dancing" (in which he played Jennifer Grey's protective dad) and the animated "Beauty and the Beast," in which he voiced the role of the candlestick Lumiere, singing "Be Our Guest."

It was his cop role in the 1981 drama "Prince of the City" that inspired his "Law & Order" character.

Born in the Bronx in 1935, Orbach was the son of a vaudeville-performer father and a radio-singer mother. He acted in school plays, then attended Northwestern University's prestigious drama school in suburban Chicago, though he couldn't swing the money to finish. In 1955, he returned to New York to hit the stage.

In a 2000 interview with The Associated Press, Orbach remembered those days fondly. Money was tight, even with his early successes: He was earning just \$45 a week in "The Fantasticks," but "even married, with a son, we lived all right."

He then began an association with producer David Merrick, appearing in three of Merrick's biggest musical successes, starting in 1961 with "Carnival," in which he played an embittered puppeteer opposite Anna Maria Alberghetti's winsome Lili.

and there's nothing definite on when he will be released," Shefrin said Wednesday. "He will be there through the new year. It's all up to the doctors when he'll get out."

Clark's wife and children have been visiting the entertainer at the hospital and there has been a huge outpouring of support from friends and fans, Shefrin said.

Clark, who went from hosting "American Bandstand," "Bloopers" and game shows to producing awards ceremonies, has been a television New Year's Eve tradition for 32 years with his shows from Times Square.

Clark also produces the American Music Awards, Academy of Country Music Awards and Golden Globe Awards.

## First water, now cup in Elvis auctions

**BELMONT, North Carolina (AP)**—Miss your chance to buy some water from a cup once used by Elvis Presley? Don't be disappointed—now you can bid on a chance to see, but not own, the cup that held the water.

The North Carolina man who sold the water on eBay last week is now auctioning off a one-time appearance of

the Styrofoam cup that originally held the water.

Wade Jones retrieved the cup and water when he went to a Presley concert in Greensboro in 1977.

He saw Presley drink from the cup while introducing his band, and later asked a security guard to give him the cup as a souvenir.

The water, sealed in a plastic

vial, sold for \$455 on the online auction site on Saturday.

Jones doesn't want to sell the cup, but is willing to put it on display.

He wanted a minimum bid of \$300, plus travel expenses, for an appearance by the cup, preferably on Elvis's birthday Jan. 8. As of Wednesday morning, Jones had received one bid for \$300.

## Daughter on short leash will try to break free

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

**DEAR ABBY:** I am 35 and the mother of a 10-year-old daughter, "Savannah," who is in the fourth grade.

Savannah claims that I am smothering her. She is not allowed to have sleepovers, and she may not attend any of the co-ed parties her friends throw. No sugar is allowed in our house unless it is a special occasion like a birthday. Whenever she goes to a friend's house, I call every hour to see how she is doing.

In the kitchen, Savannah is not allowed to use the stove, the oven, the blender, or any other appliance unless I am there to supervise.

My daughter attends an all-girls school because I don't want her exposed to some of the things boys do when they are her age. Savannah is not allowed to wear makeup, and I shop for her. Every morning, before she leaves home, she must come to me so I can monitor what she is wearing.

Abby, I love my daughter very much, and I only want what is best for her. Do you think I am smothering her?

GOOD MOM IN HOUSTON

**DEAR GOOD MOM:** I believe you are a caring parent, but I also think you have gone off the deep end. In the name of being a conscientious parent you have placed your daughter under virtual house arrest. How is your daughter to learn to be independent and make intelligent decisions if you restrict her every move?

Calling her every hour at a friend's house to "see how she's doing" is overkill. If it doesn't stop, it won't be long before she will rebel. I know you mean well, but please, talk with a counselor about this. In the name of being a "good mom," you are stunting her growth and doing your child a disservice.

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**DEAR ABBY:** I'm a college sophomore, and my roommate, "Sal," is driving me crazy. She talks down to me when we're in a group. She'll hijack my conversations and answer for me, even though I'm standing right there.

I'm not the only person who feels this way. Sal talks down to everyone. A large group of us went out to dinner and "Mike" was goofing off. She told him to sit still and use his indoor voice. She was completely serious!

She also tries to intimidate us physically. She shoves the guys around, and if the girls annoy her, she stands up as tall as she can, looks down her nose at us and announces, "I can EAT you!" At one point, she pinned me to my bed and tried to shove food in my mouth because she didn't believe I ate enough.

The few times we've tried to talk to Sal about this, she became defensive and stormed out, as she snarled that we are all immature and should grow up. We've about had enough. Can you help?

LIVING WITH THE ALPHA DOG

**DEAR LIVING:** From your description, the girl has problems beyond what you and I can solve. Counseling could help her, but only if she's willing to face the fact that she needs help.

Since talking to the "alpha dog" hasn't worked, if you're living off campus, call a meeting of the housemates and inform her that you'd like her to leave. If you're staying in a dorm, request a change of rooms. And should she lay a hand on any of you in an effort to intimidate you, call the police and report the assault.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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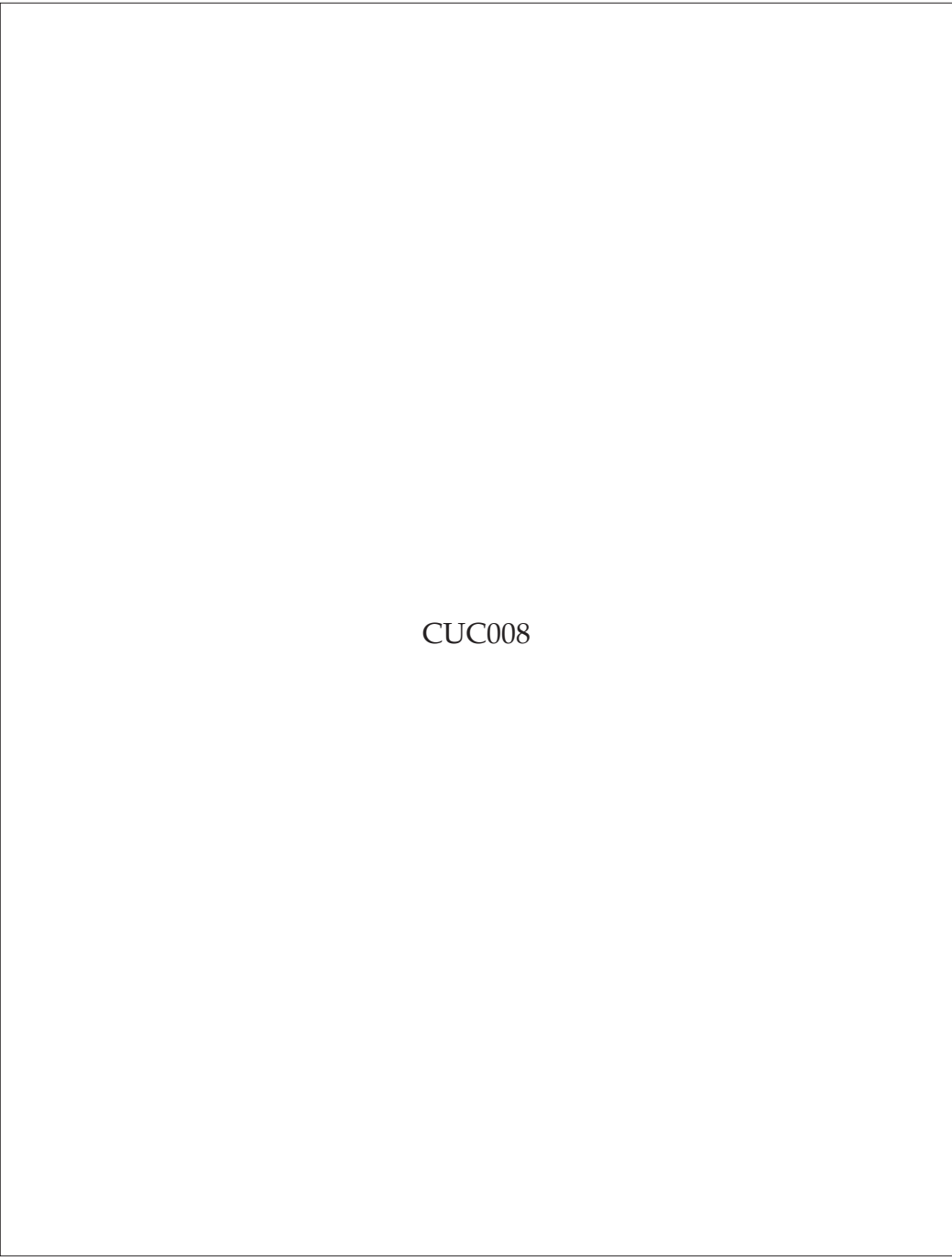




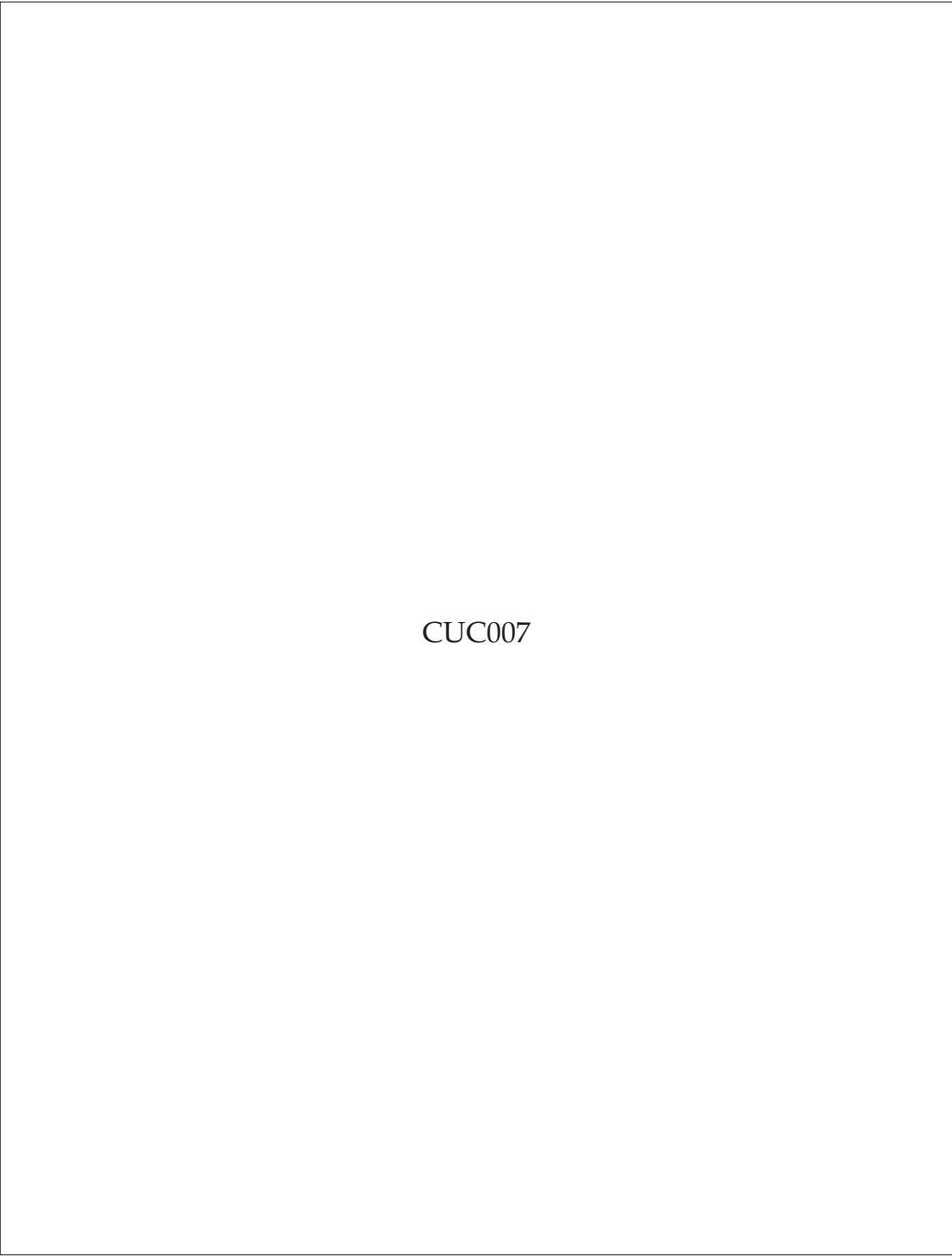




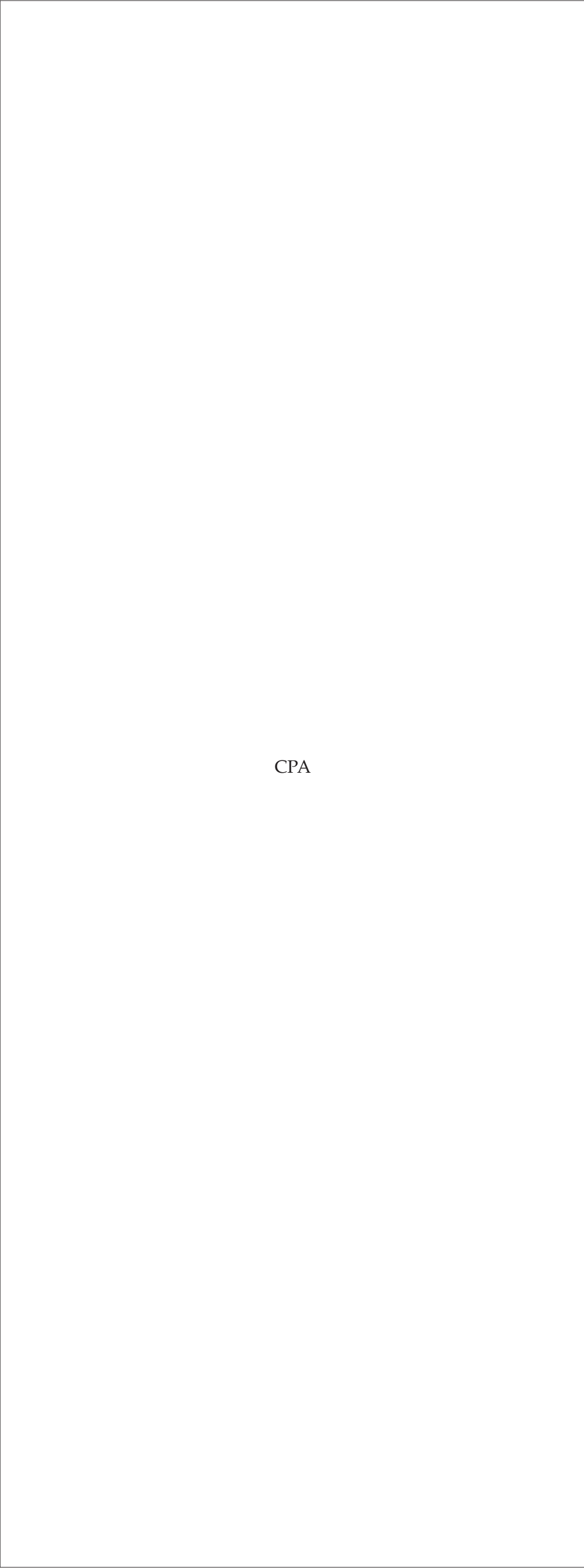




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TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

SPORTS TRANSACTIONS

**MLB**  
HOUSTON ASTROS-Fired Jimmy Williams, manager; Burt Hooton, pitching coach; and Harry Spilman, hitting coach. Named Phil Garner manager, Jim Hickey pitching coach, and Gary Gaetti hitting coach.

**NBA**  
ATLANTA HAWKS-Signed C Jason Collier.  
BOSTON CELTICS-Re-signed C Mark Blount to a six-year contract.  
CHARLOTTE BOBCATS-Signed G Jason Hart and F Tamar Slay.  
DALLAS MAVERICKS-Re-signed G Marquis Daniels to a five-year contract with a team option.  
DETROIT PISTONS-Signed F Antonio McDyess to a four-year contract with a team option and G-F Carlos Delfino to a three-year contract with a team option.  
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS-Re-signed C Adonal Foyle to a six-year contract.  
LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS-Traded F-C Melvin Ely and G Eddie House to Charlotte for 2005 and 2006 second-round draft picks.  
LOS ANGELES LAKERS-Traded C Shaquille O'Neal to Miami for F Lamar Odom, F Caron Butler, F-C Brian Grant and a future first-round draft pick.  
MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES-Signed F Brian Cardinal to a six-year contract.  
MILWAUKEE BUCKS-Signed C Etan Thomas to a six-year offer sheet.  
PHILADELPHIA 76ERS-Signed F Brian Skinner to a multiyear contract.  
PHOENIX SUNS-Signed G Quentin Richardson to a six-year offer sheet. Signed G Steve Nash to a six-yr contract.  
SAN ANTONIO SPURS-Re-signed F Bruce Bowen. Signed G Beno Udrih.  
TORONTO RAPTORS-Signed G Rafer Alston to a five-year contract.  
UTAH JAZZ-Signed F Carlos Boozer and C Mehmet Okur to six-year offer sheets. Re-signed G Carlos Arroyo to a four-year contract.

**NFL**  
GREEN BAY PACKERS-Voided the trade of DE Jamal Reynolds to Indianapolis after Reynolds failed his physical and waived him.  
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS-Released S Jason Perry.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES-Signed G Adrien Clarke to a four-year contract and LB Jeremiah Trotter to a one-year contract.

**Olympics**  
U.S. OLYMPIC MEN'S ROAD CYCLING TEAM-Announced Levi Leipheimer will replace Lance Armstrong.

**College**  
AUBURN-Named Casey Dunn assistant baseball coach.  
DARTMOUTH-Named Maribel Sanchez Souther women's cross country coach.  
EVERGREEN STATE-Named Kim Farnsworth athletic trainer.  
HOUSTON-Named John Severance women's tennis coach.  
N.J. CITY-Named Bridgette Quimpo softball coach.  
NORTH DAKOTA STATE-Named Eric Viney women's assistant volleyball coach.  
NORTHWESTERN-Announced men's junior basketball F Bernard Cote will transfer from Kentucky.  
OKLAHOMA-Named Bill Pink director of women's basketball operations.  
PALM BEACH ATLANTIC-Announced the resignation of Chris Bizol, men's and women's tennis coach, to take a position with Texas-Tyler.  
RHODE ISLAND-Announced the resignation of Boe Pearman, women's basketball coach.  
SANTA CLARA-Named M. Felipe Montoro assistant cross country coach and Steve Drake women's assistant basketball coach.  
SETON HALL-Named Gerson Echeverry men's assistant soccer coach.  
SKIDMORE-Named Darren Bennett women's basketball coach.  
ST. FRANCIS, PA.-Named Wylie Crisanti women's lacrosse coach.  
TULSA-Named Christy Connoyer softball coach.  
WRIGHT STATE-Named Rob Cooper baseball coach.

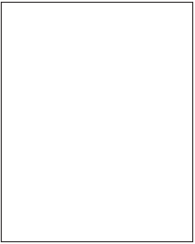
By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

RESTAURANT LEAGUE STANDINGS		
Angel Wings	3	0
Country House	3	1
Jollibee	3	1
Capricciosa	2	1
Keeraku	1	2
LSG Sky Chefs	0	3
El Segundo	0	4







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# Sports

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